THE
ANATOMY OF DANDYISM,

with some Observations on

BEAU BRUMMELL;

translated from the French

of

BARBEY D'AUREVILLY,

by

D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS :

and illustrated with dry-points by

HERMINE DAVID.

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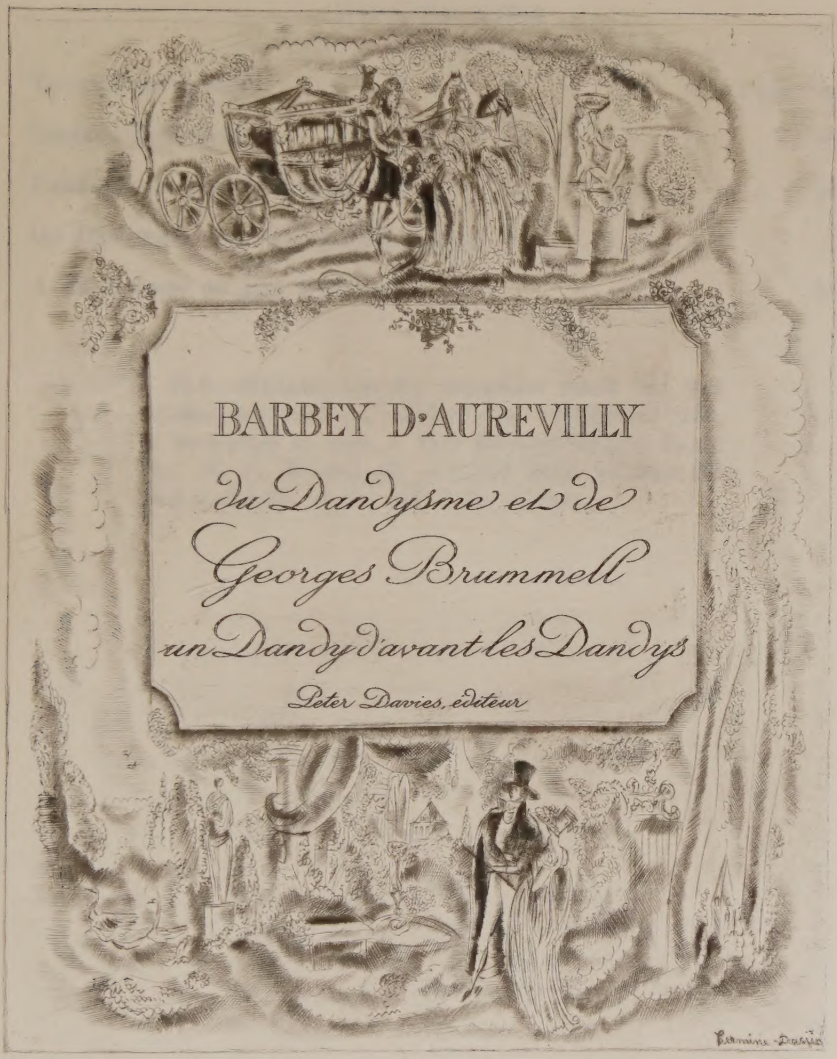
BARBEY D'AUREVILLY
Du Dandysme et de
Georges Brummell
un Dandy d'avant les Dandys
Peter Davies, éditeur

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N.B.—Madame David's dry-points made for this edition, are eight in number, viz. an engraved title, a head-piece to page 1, four full-page designs facing pp. 14, 24, 50, and 68, an initial letter on page 66, and a vignette at the end of the volume.

The edition is limited to 500 copies for sale,
of which 200 are reserved for Random House,
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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell was published in 1845 by Mancel of Caen and by Ledoyen of Paris. Mancel's edition was that of the thirty copies to which Barbey d'Aurevilly pleasantly alludes in his preface (hereafter printed) to the second edition of 1861 ; and although there is still a mild mystery concerning precedence, it seems likely that the thirty copies of Caen formed the actual first edition of this piquant little *jeu d'esprit.*

It was written when Barbey d'Aurevilly was 36 years of age, which is youth in Letters. In its preciosities of style, its inversions, its careful subtleties of analysis, its gay paradoxes, its sardonic undernote, it is essentially a young man's book ; young, too, in the calm assurance of its judgments—notably on women. It is (as he says himself) a statuette of Beau Brummell ; and it is not so much a Tanagra as a Chinese ivory, intricately carved, subtly polished, an ornament for the dressing-table of a cultivated fop. Yet who can rebut the mocking challenge to the Solemn Dull in the preface of 1861, defying them to maintain that this study of a personage whom the mediocre dismiss as a fribble is not a valuable contribution to History ? The argument is solid. ' Our most violent passions,' says La Rochefoucauld, ' give us respite occasionally ; vanity drives us always.' Vanity being the force which dictates the major part of human conduct, then such a consummate master as George Bryan Brummell, playing on the chord of universal vanity and imbecility as no one before or since has been able, is a figure which History must

respect. And Barbey d'Aurevilly's admiration for the great Dandy is not wholly ironic, nor ours as we follow him through his pleasing labyrinth of special pleading.

Since the book is concerned with universals, it is not entirely dated. Dandyism as an exact science has, as the author truly says, disappeared from English society: but relics of the Puritan ethos from which it sprang linger, and his principal indictment of the English may still stand. Not all the greasier bequests of Puritanism have noticeably vanished from our midst. Cant and hypocrisy can survive even a world cataclysm; and we are still capable, no doubt, of such delicious acrobatic feats as (for example) that of sending an aged bookseller to prison for publishing the translation of an obscene book by Zola, and later, British Virtue being avenged, receiving Zola himself on these shores with all official pomp, amid the almost hysterical plaudits of the Panjandrums. But Dandyism is no more to be found in English manners: possibly, as a modern satirist and elegant (Mr. Max Beerbohm) has suggested, because there remain very few manners. English society of the Regency was cold, selfish, material, heartless—yet not completely, as the fall of Brummell showed—and as devoured with ennui as American society is to-day: but it preserved a magnificently civilised air, a splendid tradition, and it would not have endured for a moment the kind of modern social adventurer who breaks in with nothing behind him but his money. Barbey d'Aurevilly's study of this Regency society, if here and there over-acidly etched—he could not, for example, have known the relatively creditable fact of the Regent's marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert, since the establishment of the documents pertaining is recent—is altogether a remarkable piece of psychological work.

Jules Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808-1889) was the more qualified to study English society because he himself was of pure Norman stock and an individualist. For the rest, his character is difficult. His is an

essentially aristocratic mind, isolated, independent, scornful, vigorous, often violent; a genius in which subtlety, brutality, delicacy and intensity mingle together. *Un esprit martial.* He owed something to Byron. His style is astringent; the 'bark and steel' of Boswell are in it. His contributions to literature are stamped with his private mark, and he has no imitators. All through his writings, critical, literary, and political essays written for the *Constitutionnel* or the *Journal des Débats* (to which journal Chateaubriand recommended him), novels, satire of contemporary life and letters, there sounds the note of power, originality, daring, and brilliant hardness. His two finest novels, both inspired by the Royalist rising in Normandy during the Revolution, are *L'Ensorcelée* (1854) and *Le Chevalier Destouches* (1864); both have long been the pleasure of epicures, and are now definitely ranked as classic. He stands apart in French literature. 'A fanatic for action,' says M. Paul Bourget, who points out that very characteristically, at the moment when what is called contemporary thought was inclining towards Positivism as the key to all problems, human and divine, Barbey d'Aurevilly returned to the Church and published (1851) his militant *Prophètes du Passé.*

He remained all his life a lonely, combative, haughty, idealistic, sensitive, bitter soul, with something in his idealism (I quote M. Bourget again) of Shakespeare and something—purged of Teutonic muzziness—of Carlyle. The reader is cautioned against accepting the study of him in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as a just portrait. He had a passion for reality, offensive above all to those brought up in the atmosphere of what Rémy de Gourmont calls our modern *civilisation anglicane et bourgeoise*; and this passion, as so often happens, brought on him the censure of prudes. *Une Vieille Maîtresse*, and still more *Les Diaboliques*, earned him a reputation for immorality and satanism. The satanism on examination resolves into something very mild, almost naïve; and as for the immorality—one thinks of the present vogue, among the intelligentsia of

England and America, of the perversities of Marcel Proust and of M. André Gide, flower himself of a Calvinist education; and the smile is irresistible. It is nevertheless broadly true that Barbey d'Aurevilly has received more justice from his enemies than from his friends—if such a man could be said to have friends, beyond two or three. 'Apre et solitaire destinée,' says M. Bourget, summing up, 'mais à laquelle M. d'Aurevilly aura dû de séjourner dans un monde de visions magnifiques, et de conserver une superbe intégrité de sa pensée.' He is the Cyrano de Bergerac (Rostand's Cyrano) of nineteenth century letters. He preserved his panache.

The translator of *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell* has not had an easy task. He trusts, echoing his author's own metaphor, that a wine which, if one would taste its full bouquet and subtlety, should be drunk on its own territory, has suffered travel into a foreign land without losing too much of its characteristic perfume and peculiar savour.

D. B. W. L.

London, 1928.

To M. CÉSAR DALY

Director of the *Revue de l'Architecture.*

My dear Daly,

Seventeen years ago I wrote to you :

'While you are travelling, my dear Daly, and while the remembrance of your friends can hardly tell where to light on you, here is a something (I dare not call it a book) which will await you on your doorstep. It is a statuette of a personage who hardly merits representation in anything more than a statuette : a curiosity of manners and history, just good enough to stand on the top of the whatnot in your study.

'Brummell does not belong to English political history. He brushes it through his acquaintance, but does not enter it. His place is in a history at once superior, more diffused, and more difficult to record—the history of English manners ; for political history does not embrace all social tendencies, and these should all be studied. Brummell was the expression of one of these tendencies ; otherwise his actions would be inexplicable. To describe these actions, to lay bare their foundations, to show that this influence was not merely superficial—this might be the subject for a book which Stendhal forgot to write and which might have tempted Montesquieu.

'Alas, I am neither a Stendhal nor a Montesquieu, neither eagle nor lynx ; but I have attempted nevertheless to see clearly into what many persons, doubtless, would not have deigned to explain. What I have discovered

I now offer you, my dear Daly. It gives me pleasure to dedicate to you—with your feminine, artist-like scent for grace, and your appreciation, as a thinker, of its power—this study of a man who achieved celebrity through elegance. Had I instead studied a man who achieved it by force of mind, I should with equal propriety dedicate it still to you, whose own faculties are so vigorous.

'Accept this, therefore, for a token of friendship and in memory of the days, happier than these, when I saw more of you.

'Your devoted

'Jules A. Barbey d'Aurevilly.

'Villa Beauséjour, Passy,

'*September* 19*th*, 1844.'

Well, my friend. There is not a single word of this seventeen-year-old *dedication that I would alter to-day. This must be the first time seventeen years have ever not changed anything! Let it stand entire, then, as it does here, like the friendship of which it is an expression, and which has remained with us unchanging, cloudless, and without void. I have not always been so happy as with you, a column erect among my ruins. Seventeen years! You remember what the wretched Tacitus, insupportable always because always true, calls this long waste of days. Perhaps I should do better to keep silence about them, were it not that in the weariness of having lived I have at least had the happiness, my dear Daly, of being able to tell you that I feel towards you exactly what I felt all those years ago—and, since this book is mere foppery, of* boasting *therein of my imperishable affection.*

J. A. BARBEY d'AUREVILLY.

Paris, *September* 29*th*, 1861.

PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND EDITION

This is scarcely a second edition. Some years ago a few copies of this book were printed and passed from hand to hand among a few people, and this sort of intimate and mysterious publicity brought it good fortune. Will the large edition we venture on now be as favourably received? Reputation, light creature, is like a woman; she comes when one appears to fly her. In this odd world, perhaps the best means of ensuring success would be to organise indiscretions.

But the author pretended to no such profundities when he published this trifle. He was concerned little enough in those days with literary interests and reputation. Indeed, he had other toilets to make than that of his Muse, and other anxieties than that of getting his writings read. To-day, for that matter, he is mightily amused at his preoccupations of that period; for such is Life. Is not its essence in this perpetually recurring exchange of a care for a mockery? The author of The Anatomy of Dandyism *was himself no Dandy (and the perusal of this book will abundantly demonstrate why), but he was at that youthful*

stage which inspired in Lord Byron the ironic melancholy of ' When I was a beau with curling hair. . . .' At that moment Fame itself could not outweigh a single one of those locks.

He wrote this very small book, then, with no pretensions to being an Author—Do not worry. There were plenty more. The Devil lost nothing—but solely for his own pleasure and the pleasure of some thirty others, those unknown friends of whom one is not perfectly sure, and whom one can hardly, without fatuity, boast of possessing in Paris. He was not lacking in fatuity, and therefore believed he possessed these friends ; as in fact he did. May he be permitted to say so, for he has since achieved modesty : he had his thirty readers for his thirty published copies. This was not the Combat of the Thirty, but the Rally !

If the book in question had been concerned with some great thing, some great man, doubtless it would have foundered immediately, with its handful of copies, in that silence of apathy which is the invariable tribute paid by littleness to greatness ; but it dealt with a frivolous creature who had been admitted the most consummate type of elegant triviality in a fastidious society. Well . . . everybody in the world, in the great world, *esteems himself elegant, or desires so to be. Even those who have renounced these vanities at least wish to be well-informed ; and that is why the book was read. Certain dolts, who shall be nameless, boasted of having understood it : for myself, I have assured my publisher that they will buy it. Fatuity all round ! Fatuity brought about the initial success of this trifle, and will now ensure the success of the second edition, on the first page of which one has been tempted to inscribe impertinently : ' Of a Fop, by a Fop, to Fops ' : for to the fatuous the whole world is a glass, and this book will serve as a mirror*

for their use. Many will survey themselves in it and give their moustachios a twirl : some in order to recognise themselves, others to make themselves into Brummells.

But in truth this will be useless. One does not make oneself a Brummell ; one is Brummell, or one is not. Brummell, a futile king of a futile kingdom, has his divine right and his justification for existence, like other sovereigns. However, since of late years the gaping populace has been led to believe that it is sovereign, why should the mob of the drawing-room not hug its illusions like the mob of the streets? And all the more this little book will cure the drawing-room of such illusions. They will perceive that Brummell was an individuality of the rarest, who gave himself solely ' the trouble of being born ' ; but to develop himself he needed all the advantages of a highly complex aristocratic society. They will realise how many things they need in order to become Brummells which they do not possess. The author of The Anatomy of Dandyism *has endeavoured to set down the sum of these things ; all-powerful nothings, by which one rules not only women. But he was perfectly aware, in doing this, that his book was not a manual of counsel, and that the Machiavellis of elegance would prove even greater ninnies than the Machiavellis of politics—who are already sufficiently so. He knew, finally, that it would amount to no more than a morsel of History, a scrap of Archaeology, good enough to be preserved, like an object of* vertu, *on the golden dressing-tables of the fops of the future—if any ; for Progress, which by means of political economies and territorial division is steadily making the human race a race of tramps, will not destroy the Fops, but may well abolish d'Orsay toilets as undemocratic and scandalous.*

In any case, here is the book, such as it is. Nothing in it has been

modified or erased ; a few notes here and there have simply been stuck on *to it. The gravity of the time, which has often stirred him to laughter, has not influenced the author sufficiently for him to regard this little book, in all its lightness (he prefers it thus, and is devoid of shame) as a frolic of his youth and a thing for which to make excuses now. Nothing less likely ! He would even be capable, if goaded to it, of maintaining stubbornly in the teeth of the most richly-antlered of the herd of the Solemn, that this book is as serious as any other history. What, actually, does one perceive by the flash of this spark ? One perceives Man and his vanity, social refinements and very real influences ; real, but incomprehensible to Reason alone—the great booby ! —and all the more attractive as they are the more difficult to understand and to penetrate. What, then, can be graver than this, even from the more lofty standpoint of those who are most detached from Society, who have turned their backs on its pomps and vanities, and who most despise its nothingness ? Ask them ! Are not all vanities, whatever they are called and whatever their grimaces, equal in their eyes ? If Dandyism had existed in his time, Pascal, a Dandy as they make them in France, would have been able to trace its history before retiring into Port-Royal : Pascal, of the six-horse coach. And Rancé, another tiger of austerity, before plunging into the Trappist jungle, would perhaps have translated Captain Jesse * for us instead of Anacreon. For Rancé was also a Dandy—a clerical Dandy, which is something more potent than a mathematical Dandy. And observe the influence of Dandyism ! The grave Dom Gervaise, who has written a Life of Rancé, has left us a charming description of his delightful clothes ; as if the Dom had meant*

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* The last Brummell historian—but one.

to afford us the satisfaction of a resisted temptation by inspiring in us an excruciating desire to wear them.

But this does not mean in the least that the present author of Dandyism *esteems himself in any way a Pascal or a Rancé. He has never been, and never will be a Jansenist. And he is not a Trappist . . . yet.*

J. A. BARBEY d'AUREVILLY.

I

Our propensities have their destiny. There is one against which the whole world is pitiless : this is Vanity. The moralists have scourged it in their writings, even those of them who have shown most clearly how large a place it occupies in the soul. Men of the world, who in their way are moralists also, since they have an opportunity of judging life about twenty times each day, have repeated the judgment of the books on this propensity ; the meanest of all, as it would appear from their chorus.

It is possible to oppress things as well as men. Is it true that vanity is the lowest in the hierarchy of sentiments of the soul ? And

if it is the lowest, why despise it, since it holds its rightful place ? But is it actually the lowest ? The value of a passion depends on its importance in the social scheme. Then what can be of greater use to society in the order of sentiments than this restless eagerness for the approbation of others, this inextinguishable thirst for the applause of the gallery, which in great affairs is called *love of glory*, and in small affairs *vanity*? Is love of greater value ? Or friendship ? Or pride ? Love, with its myriad degrees and its numerous derivatives, friendship, even pride, spring from a preference of another, or several others, or oneself ; and this preference is exclusive. Vanity embraces all. If vanity sometimes seeks out certain approbations, it is characteristic and a matter of honour that the withholding of one of these should make vanity suffer : she sleeps no more on the crumpled roseleaf. Love says to the beloved, ' You are my universe.' Friendship says, ' You suffice me ' ; often, ' You console me.' Pride is silent. A man of genius has said, ' Pride is a solitary monarch, idle, blind, with his crown over his eyes.' But vanity possesses a universe less restricted than that of love, and what is enough for friendship does not satisfy it. Vanity is a queen, as Pride is a king ; but she is found in company, surrounded, busy, clear-sighted, and her crown is worn where it adorns her best.

It was necessary to establish this much before discussing Dandyism —the fruit of this vanity which has been too severely branded—and the great coxcomb, George Brummell.

II

When vanity is satisfied, and shows it, it becomes fatuity. This is the impertinent name enough invented by the false-modest—

which means the whole world—for fear of sentiments which are true. Hence it would be an error to believe, as perhaps one does believe, that fatuity is exclusively vanity displayed in our relations with women. On the contrary ; there are coxcombs of every kind, fatuous by birth, by fortune, in ambition, in learning. Tufière is one of these, Turcaret another. But because women are of some importance in France the word ' fatuity ' has been chiefly applied to the vanity of those who please women and esteem themselves irresistible to them. But this fatuity, common to all nations in which women count for something, is by no means that other kind which under the name of *Dandyism* has been endeavouring for some time to become acclimatised in Paris. One is a form of universal human vanity ; the other, a particular kind, a very particular kind of vanity : English vanity. And since everything which is universal and human has its name in the tongue of Voltaire, that which is not has of necessity to be introduced ; and that is why the word *Dandyism* is not French.

It will remain foreign, like the quality it expresses. It is of no use our endeavouring to reflect every colour ; the chameleon cannot reflect white ; and white, for a nation, is the force of its originality. Were we to possess to an even greater degree the power of assimilation which distinguishes us, this gift of God would not get the upper hand of that other gift, that other power, the power of being oneself, which constitutes the personality and the very essence of a people. Well. It is the force of English originality impressing itself on human vanity—that vanity *embedded even in the hearts of scullions* against which Pascal's scorn was no more than deluded insolence —which produces what is called Dandyism. There is no means of

our sharing this with the English. It is as profound as their own genius. Mimicry is not resemblance. One can catch an air or a pose, as one can steal the shape of a dress-coat ; but the comedy is wearisome, the mask is painful, horrible to wear, even for those spirited characters who, if necessary, would be the *Fieschi* of Dandyism so much the more in the eyes of our amiable youth. The lassitude they breathe out and in gives them nothing but a false echo of Dandyism. Let them assume an air of disillusion if it pleases them ; let them wear white gloves to the elbow : the country of Richelieu will never produce a Brummell.

III

These two celebrated fops may resemble each other in human and universal vanity, but they differ by all the physiology of a race and all the genius of a society. The one belonged to that nervous, sanguine French race which leaps to the furthermost limits in the initial fury of its enthusiasms. The other was the descendant of those Northern men, pale, lymphatic, cold as the sea whose sons they are, like the sea prone to sudden anger, and warming their chilly blood at the flames of alcohol (*high-spirits*).*

Yet with such opposing temperaments, these two had both a high force of vanity, which they naturally made the mainspring of their actions. In this matter they equally brave the reproaches of the moralists, who condemn vanity instead of classifying and absolving it. Is there any reason for surprise at this, when one reflects on this propensity, kept under for eighteen centuries by the Christian idea

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* *Sic.* (TR.)

of contempt for the world which subsists still in the least Christian minds ? And, moreover, do not nearly all strong minds preserve in some niche of thought some prejudice at whose feet they do penance ? It is this which explains the malevolence with which men who esteem themselves serious (because they do not know how to smile) will inevitably refer to Brummell. It is this which, much more than party spirit, explains the cruel malice of Chamfort against Richelieu. Chamfort attacked with a biting wit, brilliant, venomous, like stabs from a poisoned crystal stiletto. And in this matter Chamfort, atheist as he was, bore the yoke of the Christian idea, and, himself a mass of vanity, could not bear that the sentiment from which he suffered should make others happy.

For Richelieu, like Brummell, even more than Brummell, tasted every kind of glory and pleasure that opinion can create. Both, obeying the instinct of their vanity (we must learn to pronounce the word without horror) as one obeys the instinct of one's ambition or one's love, achieved success. But the analogy stops there. It was not sufficient that they differed in temperament ; the society on which each depended stood out in each of them, and once more contrasts them. In the case of Richelieu, society had broken all its restraints in an implacable rage for amusement. In Brummell's case, society champed its bit from sheer ennui. For the former, society was dissolute, for the latter, hypocritical. It is in this double temper that one finds above all the difference between the foppery of Richelieu and the Dandyism of Brummell.

IV

Actually only one was a Dandy. Before he became the kind of fop his name connotes Richelieu was a *grand seigneur* in an expiring society. He was a general in a military nation. He was a beau at an epoch when the rebel senses proudly shared dominion with the mind, and when the morals of the period forbade nothing that was pleasant. Behind what Richelieu actually was, it is possible still to conceive a Richelieu. He had with him all the forces of life. But remove the Dandy, and what remains of Brummell? He was capable of nothing more, but also nothing less than being the greatest Dandy of his time, and of all time. He was that precisely and purely: one might almost, if one dared, add simply. In the social pell-mell which for politeness is called a society, destiny is almost always greater than a man's faculties, or his faculties superior to destiny. But for Brummell, a rare happening, there was conformity between nature and his destiny, between his gifts and his fortune. Sheridan was wittier, more vivid; Byron was a greater poet—for Brummell was also a poet; Lord Yarmouth, or Byron again, was a greater aristocrat. Yarmouth, Byron, Sheridan and so many others of this time, men famous in every way, were Dandies, but also something more. Brummell had nothing of what with some was passion or genius, with others high birth or immense wealth. He was the gainer by this indigence, for being reduced to the single force of what distinguished him, he raised himself to the rank of a Thing: he became Dandyism itself.

V

This is almost as difficult to describe as it is to define. Those who observe a thing only on its smallest side have imagined that Dandyism was chiefly the art of deportment, costume, a fortunate and audacious dictatorship of the toilet and exterior elegance. It is certainly that ; but it is much more.* Dandyism is a whole state

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* *Everyone makes this mistake, including the English themselves. Has not their Thomas Carlyle, the author of* Sartor Resartus, *recently taken upon himself to discuss Dandyism and the Dandy in a book called the* Philosophy of Clothes ? *But Carlyle sketches a fashion-plate in the manner of Hogarth, and says, 'Here is your Dandyism!' Yet it is not even a caricature, for caricature exaggerates everything and suppresses nothing. Caricature is the exasperated over-emphasis of reality, but the reality of Dandyism is human, social, and spiritual. It is certainly not a suit of clothes walking alone ; on the contrary, a certain manner of wearing clothes created Dandyism. One may be a Dandy in a ragged coat. Lord Spencer was certainly one with his single-skirted coat ; he cut the other off and created the thing which bears his name. One day, if this is credible, the Dandies even evolved the fancy of the* threadbare coat. *It happened precisely under the dictatorship of Brummell. They were at the end of their ingenuity and could invent no more, so they discovered this, which was so* dandy (*I know of no other word to express it*)—*namely, to have their coats made threadbare all over, before they wore them, till they resembled nothing more than a kind of lacy, cloudy stuff. The gods desired to walk abroad enveloped in their own clouds. The operation was delicate and long, and a piece of*

of being, and one exists only in a material and visible aspect. It is a state of being entirely composed of fine shades, as always happens in very ancient and hyper-civilised societies, in which comedy is

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sharpened glass was required to perform it. Here is a veritable truth about Dandyism. The clothes matter not at all. They are hardly there.

*Here is another fact: Brummell wore gloves which exactly moulded themselves to the shape of his hands, like damp muslin. But his Dandyism was not in the perfection of these gloves, which showed the contour of the nails as does the flesh: the point was that they had been composed by four special artists, three for the hand and fingers, one for the thumb.**

Thomas Carlyle, who has written another book called 'On Heroes,' *giving us the Hero-Poet, the Hero-King, the Hero-Man-of-Letters, the Hero-Priest, the Hero-Prophet, and even the Hero-God, should have given us also the Hero-of-Leisured-Elegance, the Hero-Dandy; but he forgot him. Actually what he says in* Sartor Resartus *of Dandies in general —he calls them, by a big word, a* sect (Dandiacal Sect)*—shows sufficiently that with his foggy German outlook the English Jean-Paul perceived nothing of the precise, cool tints which* were *Brummell. He would have dealt with him with all the profundity of those little French historians, writing in grave, stupid reviews, who have judged Brummell much as he would have been judged by bootmakers and tailors whom he would have disdained to employ. Oh, these twopenny Dantans who carve their little false busts with a pocketknife out of a cake of Windsor soap rejected from the bath!*

* I am so anxious to make myself clear and intelligible that I will risk the ridiculous procedure of putting a note within a note. The Prince von Kaunitz, who though not an Englishman (being actually an Austrian) comes nearest to the Dandies by reason of his calm nonchalance, *majestic frivolity* and ferocious egoism—he used to say nobly, '*I have no friend*,' and neither the dying nor the

become a rarity and in which breeding hardly triumphs over ennui. And the antagonism between breeding and the ennui it engenders was nowhere more strongly and fundamentally felt than in England, in the society of the Word and the Law : and perhaps it is from this fight to the death, as eternal as the duel between Death and Sin in Milton, that sprang the profound originality of that Puritan society, expressing itself in fiction in terms of Clarissa Harlowe, in fact in terms of Lady Byron.* On the day when victory is finally decided it is to be assumed that the state of being called Dandyism will be greatly modified, if it still exists ; for it is the direct result of this endless struggle between a code of manners and boredom. †

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* *In the matter of authors, it has also produced women like Miss Edgworth, Miss Aikin, and others. See the latter's Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth : the style and the opinions of a pedant and a prude on a prude and a pedant.*

† *I need not insist on the ennui which eats at the heart of English society and gives it a depressing superiority in the matter of corruptness and suicide over other societies devoured by the same evil. Modern ennui is the daughter of Analysis ; but English society, the richest in the world, adds to this, our common tyrant, that Roman ennui sprung from satiety, which might multiply the number of Tiberiuses at Capri, excluding the Empire, if the proportional mean of societies were composed of stronger personalities.*

death of Maria Theresa advanced the time of his rising from bed by one hour nor abridged by one minute the time he devoted to his mirific toilet—the Prince von Kaunitz, I say, was not a Dandy when he put on a satin corset, like Alfred de Musset's Andalusian, but he was a Dandy when, in order to give his hair the *exact tone*, he stalked through a succession of salons, whose length and number he had exactly calculated, while valets armed with puffs powdered him for *just the time it took him to walk the distance.*

And again, one of the consequences of Dandyism, one of its principal characteristics—or to speak more accurately, its most general characteristic—is its ability always to produce the unexpected, something for which a mind accustomed to the yoke of routine cannot in sound logic be prepared. Eccentricity, another fruit of English soil, produces this as well, but in a different manner, a wild, blind, and irregular manner. This is the revolt of the individual against established Order, sometimes against Nature : but here it verges on madness. Dandyism, on the contrary, plays with the regulations, but at the same time pays them due respect. It suffers from them, and avenges itself by submitting ; it even demands them again after it escapes them ; it dominates and is dominated by turns. Double and mutable character ! To play this game it is necessary to have at one's command all the graces which make up Grace, as all the delicate tints of the prism unite to form the opal.

This is what Brummell possessed. He possessed grace as Providence dowers it, and as the strait-jacketing of society deforms it. He possessed it nevertheless, and by its means he responded to the capricious needs of a bored society too rigidly stooping under the rigours of a code. He was a proof of that truth which should be repeated incessantly to men subject to routine : namely, if the wings of Fancy are clipped, they sprout again longer by half.* He possessed that charming familiarity which alights on everything and

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* *Observe, in the American newspapers, the enthusiasm inspired by Mlle. Elssler in the bosoms of the descendants of the Puritans of old England : a dancer's leg turning the Round-Heads !*

profanes nothing. He lived on terms of equality, as a companion, with all the powers and all the leaders of his time, and raised himself by his facility to their level. Where cleverer men would have perished, he escaped. His audacity was accurate. He could caress the axe-edge with impunity. They say, however, that this axe, whose edge he had so often defied, took off his head at last, when he allowed the vanity of a Dandy like himself, a Royal Dandy, His Majesty King George IV, to become concerned for his downfall. But his empire had been so great that he could have regained it, had he wished.

VI

His whole life was an influence ; that is to say, it can hardly be recounted. One feels it while it operates, and when it ceases one can describe the results : but if these results are of the same nature as the influence which created them, if they last no longer, then their history becomes unwritable. Herculaneum may be discovered under the ashes ; but a few years heaped on the manners of a society bury it deeper than all the dust of volcanoes. Memoirs which are the history of such manners are themselves no more than anecdotes.* Therefore we shall not re-discover English society of Brummell's time as it should be re-discovered, clear and exact, if not alive. And therefore we shall never be able to follow Brummell's influence, in all its undulating extent and range, on his contemporaries. Byron's *mot*, that he would rather be Brummell than the Emperor Napoleon,

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* *Not always even that. What are the* Memoirs *of Wraxall, for instance ? Yet what man was ever better placed for observing than he ?*

will always seem either a silly affectation or a stroke of irony. The real significance of such a phrase is lost.

Instead of decrying the author of *Childe Harold* let us rather comprehend him at the moment of expressing his audacious preference. He was a poet and a man of imagination, and he was struck—because he could judge it—by the sway of Brummell over the fancies of a society at once hypocritical and sick of its hypocrisies. There was there a plain object-lesson of individual omnipotence which would chime more sympathetically with the nature of Byron's capricious genius than any other demonstration of omnipotence whatsoever.

VII

It is nevertheless with words similar to Byron's that the history of Brummell must be written, and by some singular mystification of Fate these are precisely the words which will make it unintelligible. Since admiration cannot be justified by facts which have perished completely, because they were of their essence ephemeral, the authority of the greatest name and the homage of the most captivating genius can but render the enigma more obscure. What endures least of any society, indeed, that aspect of its morals which leaves no débris, that aroma which is too subtle to be caught—these are the manners, the untransferable manners * by virtue of which Brummell was a prince of his period. Like the orator, the great actor, the great talker, like all who, as Buffon said, speak to the body by the

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* *Manners are the fusion of movements of the mind and body ; one cannot paint such movements.*

body, Brummell possesses only a name, which glitters in mysterious refulgence through all the memoirs of his time. In these the position he held is but poorly explained ; but they all perceive it, and that justifies our meditation on it. As for the actual detailed study for the portrait which is still to paint, until now no man has faced the ungrateful task, no thinker has endeavoured to account, gravely and critically, for this influence, responding to some law, or some caprice —that is, to a deviation from a law which becomes a law itself. For such a task profound intellects lack finesse, and fine intellects depth.

Many have essayed, however. In Brummell's own lifetime two celebrated but too-finely-sharpened pens, dipped in a too-scented Indian ink, dashed off on pale blue silver-edged paper some of the more obvious traits by which Brummell was perceptible. It is all quite charming, delicately witty, and careless of penetration. Such is *Pelham*, such is *Granby*. These are Brummell up to a point, since in both works the authors dogmatise on the subject of Dandyism. But was it their intention to depict him, if not in the facts of his life, at least in the realities of his being, within the possibilities of a romance ? As regards *Pelham* one cannot be very sure. As regards *Granby*, one can be a little more so ; the portrait of Trebeck seems drawn from life. Such strange tints, half nature, half affectation, are not invented ; one feels the actual Presence must have breathed life into the brush recording them.

But with the exception of Lister's novel, in which Brummell, if it were necessary to seek him there, may be found much more faithfully portrayed than in Bulwer's *Pelham*, there is no English work whatsoever which shows Brummell as he was, and which explains even a little clearly the power of his personality. Recently, true, a

distinguished Englishman * has published two volumes in which he has gathered together, with angelic patience, all the known facts concerning Brummell's life. Why should such effort and care have resulted in a colourless chronicle, a pack of history-cards with no under-side ? For it is the historical explanation which Brummell lacks. He has admirers like the epigrammatic Cecil, enquirers like Captain Jesse, enemies . . . no name is mentioned. But among those of his contemporaries who remain, among pedants of all ages, honest souls whose minds have the two left arms with which Rivarol equipped all Englishwomen, there are some who are sincerely indignant at the splendour attaching to Brummell's name. Such grave, heavy moralists feel themselves insulted by such an apotheosis of Frivolity. The historian of the great Dandy—that is, the judge, unswayed equally by enthusiasm and hatred—has not yet appeared, and each day as it passes is a further assurance against his ever being born. The reason has been explained. If his historian does not appear, fame will have been one more mirror for Brummell : while he lived, it will have reflected him in the sparkling purity of its fragile surface ; but, like a mirror when there is no more a figure before it, now he is dead it will have preserved nothing of him.

VIII

Because Dandyism is not one man's invention but the consequence of a certain state of society which existed before Brummell, it would

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* *Captain Jesse, who has published two massive octavos on Brummell, and who, before publication, placed at our disposition, with extreme courtesy, the information he possessed regarding the famous Dandy.*

perhaps be fitting to trace its presence in the history of English manners and to fix its origin. There seems every reason to believe that its origin is French. At Charles II's restoration Elegance entered England on the arm of Immorality; her sister, as she was called then, and as was sometimes abundantly credible. She attacked with derisive laughter the terrible, imperturbable glumness of Cromwell's Puritans. At that time manners, which are always—whatever their tendency, good or bad—profound in Great Britain, exaggerated this severity. In order to breathe it was necessary to throw off the yoke, to unbuckle the heavy strait-jacket; and Charles II's courtiers, who had drunk in the champagne-glasses of France a lotus which brought forgetfulness of the sombre religiosities of their own country, described the tangent by which escape was possible. Many took that way. 'The disciples had very soon outstripped their former masters, and,' as a modern writer * has observed with piquant exactness, 'their good-will toward corruption was so sincere that the Rochesters and Shaftesburys overstrode contemporary French morals by a century and landed in the Regency.' One need not cite Buckingham, nor Hamilton, nor Charles II himself, nor any of those whose memories of exile were stronger than their impressions of the return. One need simply envisage those who, while remaining Englishmen, became susceptible to foreign influence from a longer distance and introduced the reign of the *Beaux*; like Sir George Hewitt, Wilson, who was killed in a duel, they say, by Law, and Fielding, whose handsome features arrested the sceptical

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* *M. Amédée Renée, in his introduction to* The Letters of Lord Chesterfield. *Paris*, 1842.

glance of the careless King, and who, after marrying the famous Duchess of Cleveland, played over once again the comedy of Lauzun with the Grande Mademoiselle. As may be seen, the very name they gave themselves admits French influence. Their elegance chimed with their name. It was not sufficiently native nor sufficiently blended with the originality of the nation which gave birth to Shakespeare, with that inner force which was to fuse with it later. Let there be no confusion here: the Beaux are not the Dandies. They precede them. Already, it is true, Dandyism stirs beneath the surface; but it does not yet appear. It is to emerge from the depths of English Society. Fielding dies in 1712. After him Colonel Edgworth, so praised by Steele (himself a beau in his youth) continues the figured gold chain of the *Beaux*, which ends with Nash, to begin again with Brummell: but this time with Dandyism added.

For although Dandyism is of later birth, it is during the interval between Fielding and Nash that it takes its development and form. Its name (whose root, possibly, is French once more) arrived late. It is not found in Johnson. But the thing it signified already existed, and, as it should, among the greatest personalities. For since the worth of a man consists in the array of his faculties, and since Dandyism represented exactly those faculties which had no place in manners, every man of distinction was bound to take, and in greater or lesser degree did take, the tone of Dandyism. Thus Marlborough, Chesterfield, Bolingbroke: Bolingbroke especially, for Chesterfield, who in his *Letters* had drawn the character of a *Gentleman*, as Machiavelli drew his *Prince*, less by inventing a rule than by recording a custom, firmly adheres to received opinion. Marl-

borough, with his proud feminine beauty, is more given to avarice than to vanity. Bolingbroke alone is advanced, consummate, a true Dandy of the later period. He has all the Dandy's assurance in conduct, the sumptuous impertinence, the preoccupation with exterior effect, and perpetually present vanity. One remembers that he was jealous of Harley for being stabbed by Guiscard, and used to console himself by saying that the assassin had doubtless mistaken one Minister for the other. Was he not seen, also—horrible thought !—to shake off the pruderies of the London drawing-rooms and parade the most naïve passion for an orange-girl, possibly not even pretty, whose stand was under the galleries of Parliament ? * Finally, he invented the very device of Dandyism, the *nil admirari* of these small-footed gods which aims perpetually at producing surprise while preserving impassibility.† And Dandyism suited no one better than Bolingbroke ; was it not freethinking in regard to the manners and rules of society, exactly as ' philosophy ' was in regard to morals and religion ? As the philosophers erected

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* *London and Westminster Review.*

† *Dandyism introduces antique calm into modern agitations ; but the calm of the ancients came from the harmony of their faculties and the plenitude of a freely-developed existence, whereas the calm of Dandyism is the pose of a spirit which has already ranged among many ideas and is now too languid to be capable of animation. If a Dandy were eloquent he would be so in the manner of Pericles, arms folded under the cloak. See the ravishing, impertinent, and essentially modern attitude of Girodet's Pyrrhus listening to the imprecations of Hermione. That will better explain what I mean than all I have written here.*

a superior obligation challenging the law, so the Dandies, of their own authority, proclaimed a rule above those which swayed the most patrician world, the world most attached to tradition ; * and by means of mockery, an acid, and elegance, a fondant, they succeeded in imposing that mobile law which, when all is said, is no more than the insolence of their own personality. Such a result is curious and derived from the nature of things. It is useless for a society to stand firm, or for aristocracies to rally against what is not received opinion ; one day Caprice arises and cleaves a way through the apparently impenetrable ranks : apparently impenetrable, but undermined by ennui. It is in this way that on the one hand Frivolity,† among a people of rigid bearing and gross utilitarianism, and on the other hand Imagination, demanding its rights in the face of a moral system too narrow to be genuine, produced a kind of translation, a science of manner and attitude, impossible elsewhere, of which Brummell was the finished expression, and which will never again be equalled. We shall see why.

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* *And not only in England. When Princess d'Aschakoff in Russia left off rouge she performed a Dandiacal act ; possibly more than that, for it was an act of the most scandalous independence. Rouge means beauty in Russia, and in the eighteenth century the very street beggars would not have dared to appear without it. See Rulhière on this woman; Rulhière, a writer with Dandyism at the tip of his pen, stabbing into profundity. If History were but an anecdote, how he would write it !*

† *The malignant name given to a whole series of preoccupations perfectly legitimate in the main, since they correspond to actual needs.*

IX

George Bryan Brummell was born in Westminster, the son of W. Brummell, Esquire, private secretary to that Lord North, himself a Dandy at times, who dozed his contempt on the Front Bench under the most rancorous attacks of Opposition orators. North made the fortune of the elder Brummell, a man of orderly mind and active capability. Pamphleteers who screamed corruption, hopefully awaiting their turn to be corrupted, have called Lord North the God of Emoluments ; but it is only just to say that his payments to the elder Brummell were the reward of service. After the fall of the Ministry and of his benefactor Mr. Brummell became High Sheriff of Berkshire, retiring to Donington Castle, celebrated as the former residence of Chaucer, and living there with that opulent hospitality of which the English, alone of all peoples, retain the secret and the power. He had kept his influential relationships, and among other contemporary celebrities his guests frequently included Fox and Sheridan ; thus one of the earliest impressions of the future Dandy was a consciousness of the breath of these brilliant and charming men on his head. They dowered him like the fairies ; but with only half their power and the more ephemeral of their faculties. There can be no doubt that seeing and hearing these men, these strong minds, the glory of human intelligence, conducting conversation like a political discourse, with wit equal to their eloquence, the young Brummell developed those faculties in himself which made him later (to use a word employed by the English) one of the finest *conversationalists* in England. He was sixteen when his father died, in 1794. In 1790 he had been sent to Eton, and was now already distinguished, out-

side the schoolroom, for those qualities which later made him so eminent. The care with which he dressed, the frigid languor of his manner, procured him among his fellows a title then much in vogue.

The name of Dandy was not yet fashionable, and the arbiters of elegance were calling themselves *Bucks* or *Macaronis*. Brummell was called *Buck Brummell*.* No one, as his contemporaries testify, exercised more influence than he over his companions at Eton, excepting perhaps George Canning ; but Canning's influence came from an ardour of head and heart, whereas Brummell's was due to less intoxicating qualities. He justified Machiavelli's saying, ' The world belongs to the cool of mind.' From Eton he went up to Oxford, and there found the kind of success for which he was destined. He conquered there by the more exterior aspects of his personality, his superiority manifesting itself not in laborious mental exercises but in social relationships. Three months after his father's death he came down from Oxford and took a cornetcy in the Tenth Hussars, commanded by the Prince of Wales.

A great deal of trouble has been taken to explain the violent liking for Brummell which suddenly captured the Prince. Stories have been told which were not worth the telling. Where is the need for such gossip ? There is much better than that. For given Brummell, it was impossible for him not to attract the attention and liking of the man who, they said, was happier in and prouder of the elegance of his manners than his exalted rank. The brilliance of that youthfulness which he tried to make eternal is well known. At

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* Buck *in English means ' male ' : it is not the word which is untranslatable, but its significance.*

this time the Prince of Wales was thirty-two ; a handsome man, with the lymphatic, heavy good looks of the House of Hanover, endeavouring to animate them by splendour of dress and to impart vivacity to them with the fiery sparkle of diamonds ; scrofulous of soul as of body, though at least he had not debased his grace, that last virtue of the courtezan. The future George IV recognised in Brummell a portion of himself, a portion which had remained healthy and luminous : and this is the secret of the favour he showed him. It was as simple as conquest by a woman. Are there not friendships which spring from attributes of the body and exterior graces, as there are loves which spring from the soul, from impalpable and secret charm ? Such was the friendship of the Prince of Wales for the young cornet of Hussars ; a sentiment not much more than a sensation, perhaps the only kind which could flower in the depths of that obese soul, into which the body had overflowed.

And thus the inconstant favour which Lord Barrymore, Hanger, and so many others had enjoyed in their turn fell on the head of Brummell with all the suddenness of a caprice and all the fury of an obsession. He was presented on the famous Terrace at Windsor, surrounded by the most critical representatives of fashion, and displayed there all that the Prince of Wales most esteemed of human things : a splendid youth enhanced by the aplomb of the man who has judged life and can dominate it, the subtlest and most audacious mingling of impertinence and respect, and finally a genius for dress and deportment protected by a gift for perpetually witty repartee. Certainly to carry off such a success demanded something more than extravagance of either aspect. The word *extravagance* is employed by baffled moralists as the word *nerves* is by physicians. From this

moment Brummell found himself elevated to very high rank in public opinion. He was seen, preferred before the greatest names of England, the son of a simple esquire, of a private secretary whose grandfather had been a merchant, he, Brummell, carrying out the duties of best man at the wedding of the Heir-Presumptive to Caroline of Brunswick. Such distinction grouped around him immediately, on the most agreeable terms of familiarity, the aristocracy of the drawing-rooms : Lord Petersham,* Lord R. E. Somerset, Charles Ker, Charles and Robert Manners. So far there was no occasion for surprise : he was simply fortunate ; born, as the English say, with a silver spoon in his mouth. He had on his side that something incomprehensible which we call our *star*, which decides our career without justice or reason. But what is surprising, what justifies his good fortune, is that he fixed it in its place. Being a spoiled child of Fortune, he became the spoiled child of Society. Byron speaks somewhere of a portrait of Napoleon in his imperial cloak, and adds : ' It seemed as though he were hatched from it.' The same thing might be said of Brummell and of the celebrated dress-coat of his invention. He began his reign without trouble, without hesitation, with that confidence which is a conscience. Everything bowed to his strange power, and he had no opposition. In a world where relationships outweigh merit and where men for bare existence' sake go armoured like crustaceans, Brummell had with him, much more as admirers than rivals, the Dukes of York and

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* *To the short-sighted a model of Dandyism, but to those who do not judge by appearances no more a Dandy than a very well-turned-out woman is a woman of elegance.*

Cambridge, the Earls of Westmoreland and Chatham (Pitt's brother), the Duke of Rutland, Lord Delamere, the highest of the political and social worlds. The women, who are, like the clergy, ever on the side of Authority, sounded admiring fanfares from their rosy lips ; they were the trumpeters of his fame, and they remained trumpeters ; for here is Brummell's originality, here is where he differs essentially from Richelieu and nearly all men organised to charm. He was not what the world calls a libertine. Richelieu for his part too closely imitated those Tartar conquerors who made their beds with festoons of women. Brummell claimed no such booty and trophies of victory ; his vanity did not steep itself in the heat of his blood. The Sirens, those daughters of the sea with irresistible voices, bore their charms covered with impenetrable scales—the more delicious, alas ! as they were dangerous.

His vanity lost nothing by this : on the contrary. It never found itself brought up against another passion which might load an equal scale. It reigned alone, and was the stronger.* To love, even in the least elevated sense, to desire, is always to be dependent, to be the servant of desire. The arms which enfold most tenderly are still a chain, and if one is a Richelieu, or even Don Juan himself, when one breaks the embrace of these tender arms, one breaks only a single link. This is the slavery which Brummell escaped. His triumphs

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* *Affectation produces aridity. But a Dandy, although possessing too much taste not to be simple, is always a trifle affected : this is the very refined affectation of the very artificial talent of Mlle. Mars. If one were passionate one would be too vital to be a Dandy. Alfieri could never have been one, Byron was only at certain times.*

had all the insolence of indifference. He never felt the swimming of the heads he turned. In a country like England, where pride and moral cowardice mingle to set up prudery for modesty, it was piquant to see a man, and a man so young, uniting in his person all the seductions, conventional and natural, punishing women without sincerity for their pretensions and stopping short with them at the boundary of gallantry, which they have set there not to be respected. Thus did Brummell act, without calculation and without the least effort. For those who know women, it is evident that this doubled his power; he wounded the romantic egotism of these haughty ladies, he gave corrupted pride food for meditation.

Though king of fashion, he had no acknowledged mistress. He was more skilful a Dandy than the Prince of Wales, and took to himself no Mrs. Fitzherbert. He was a sultan without the handkerchief. No illusions of the heart, no storming of the senses affected the judgments he delivered, to weaken or suspend them. And thus they were sovereign. One word from George Bryan Brummell, for praise or blame, was then sufficient. He was the master of opinion. If such a man and such a power, by way of hypothesis, could exist in Italy, what woman deeply in love would spare a thought for either? But in England the woman most madly in love, when she estimated the effect of a flower or tried a new dress, thought much more of the judgment of Brummell than of the pleasure of her lover. A duchess (and it is well known what amount of haughtiness such a title sanctions in London drawing-rooms) warned her daughter in the midst of a ball, at the risk of being overheard, to look carefully to her deportment, her movements, and her replies if by chance Mr. Brummell should condescend to address a word to her; for in this the first

phase of his career he still mingled with the crowd of dancers in fashionable halls, where the most exquisite hands rested idle, awaiting his. Later, intoxicated with the exceptional position he had procured himself, he renounced the rôle of dancing-partner, which had become too vulgar for him. He would linger merely a few moments at the beginning of a ball, survey it in a glance, estimate it in a word, and disappear ; thus putting in practice the famous Dandiacal precept : ' So long as you have not made your effect in Society, stay : when you have made your effect, go.' He was perfectly aware of his crushing prestige. For him effect was no more a matter of time.

With all this radiance, this sovereignty over opinion, this splendid youth, which heightens glory, and this charming, pitiless bearing which women curse and adore, there is no doubt that Brummell inspired many passions of opposing kinds—profound loves, inexorable hatreds ; but nothing of this has become public.* Cant stifled any soul which may have dared to cry out. In England the proprieties which so emasculate the heart are somewhat opposed to the existence of a Mlle. de Lespinasse, should she desire to be born ; and as for a Caroline Lamb, Brummell knew none of her kind, for the

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* *There have been stories of Lady J——y, whom he is said to have whistled from the Regent, as they say, with a lightness worthy of its object. But Lady J——y remained his friend, and passions which end in friendship are more chimerical than beautiful women ending in a fish's tail. A poet's hand has struck a redoubtable blow at the illusions of generous but mortal hearts : 'All the time we are lovers, we are not friends ; when we love no more, we are nothing less than friends.'*

simple reason that women are sensitive more to treachery than to indifference. One woman only, so far as we are aware, has left behind her phrases concerning Brummell which conceal and reveal passion ; this is the courtezan Harriette Wilson ; and, as is natural, she was jealous not of Brummell's heart but of his reputation. The qualities from which the Dandy extracted his power were those which would have made the fortune of the courtezan. And women, without being Harriette Wilsons, are extremely well aware of the reservations owed their sex ! They have a gift for mathematics, like men, like all geniuses ; neither do they forgive Sheridan, despite his genius, the impertinence of having had his hand sculptured as the finest in England.

X

Alcibiades was the handsomest of good generals, but George Bryan Brummell lacked the military temperament. He did not long remain in the Tenth Hussars, and had probably entered the regiment with a more serious object than one would have imagined : namely for the purpose of attaining contact with the Prince of Wales and the forging of the relationships which brought him so quickly to the front. It has been observed, and with sufficient contempt, that the uniform must have had an irresistible fascination for him. This is attempting to explain the Dandy through the emotions of a subaltern. A Dandy who stamps everything with his cachet, who has no existence outside *a certain exquisite originality* (Lord Byron *), must

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* *Only an Englishman could use this word. In France originality is an outsider, forbidden board and lodging, hated as a trait of aristo-*

of necessity hate a uniform. But it is—and this concerns graver questions than that of costume—inevitable for a man of Brummell's type, once his influence is dead, to be misjudged. While he was alive the most rebellious submitted to it ; nowadays the analysis of such a personage becomes a difficult essay in psychology, given all these dominant prejudices. Women can never forgive Brummell for sharing their grace ; men, because they have not shared it as he did.

We have said it already, but we shall not tire of repeating it : independence makes the Dandy. Otherwise there would be a Dandiacal code, which there certainly is not.* Every Dandy has daring, but his daring is blended with that tact which stops in time and can fix, midway between originality and eccentricity, Pascal's famous point of intersection. This is why Brummell could not be amenable to the constraints of military regulation, which is equally a uniform. From this standpoint he was an execrable officer.

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cracy. It stirs up ever-ready mediocrities against those who are different, *to a gnashing of gums which does not devour, but leaves a stain.* Be like everybody else *is a principle equivalent, for mankind, to that principle with which young girls' heads are filled—the* ' Be esteemed : it is essential ! ' *of the* Mariage de Figaro.

* *If there were, one could be a Dandy by simply observing the law. Anyone might become a Dandy who pleased ; there would be a set of rules to follow, and that is all. Unfortunately for aspiring youth it is not wholly thus. Doubtless in the matter of Dandyism there are certain principles and certain traditions ; but all this is governed by Fancy, and Fancy is only permitted to those whom it fits and who consecrate it by exercise.*

Captain Jesse, an admirable biographer, who does not forget enough, tells several stories of his hero's lack of discipline. He breaks ranks during manœuvres ; he neglects his colonel's orders ; but his colonel is under the sway of his charm, and no disciplinary action follows. In three years Brummell obtains his captaincy. Suddenly his regiment is ordered into garrison at Manchester ; and on this the youngest captain in the most magnificent regiment in the army quits the service. He explained to the Prince of Wales that he did not care to be so far away from him, which was more amiable a subterfuge than that of not caring to leave London ; for it was London above everything which kept him back. His fame had been born there, its native air was the air of those drawing-rooms in which wealth, leisure, and the last degree of civilisation produce the charming affectations which have replaced natural behaviour. The pearl of Dandyism thrown away on Manchester, a manufacturing town ! It is as monstrous as the thought of Rivarol at Hamburg.

He saved the future for his renown, and remained in London, taking lodgings at No. 4 Chesterfield Street, opposite George Selwyn, one of the stars of fashion who had paled before his rising. His private fortune, considerable enough, was not equal to his position. Others, and many others among these sons of Peers and Nabobs, lived in a style of luxury which would have stifled his own if what is thoughtless could stifle what thinks. Brummell's style of living was more intelligent than dazzling ; one more proof of the sureness of that judgment which leaves scarlet to savages, and which later invented the great axiom of the toilet : ' To be perfectly dressed one must not be noticeable.' George Bryan Brummell had his led horses, an excellent cook, and the home of a woman with poetic

gifts. He gave delightful dinners, at which the guests were chosen as carefully as the wines. Like his countrymen, and above all those of his time,* his habit was to drink to the point of intoxication.

Lymphatic, highly strung, living in the ennui of this idle English existence which even Dandyism only half escapes, he sought the emotions of that other life which one finds at the bottom of the wine-glass, a life with stronger throbbing pulses, tingling, dazzling. But even then, with one foot overhanging the whirling abyss of intoxication, he remained master of his wit and elegance like Sheridan, whom one is bound to quote because he is always found at the further end of every avenue of superiority.

It is by this that Brummell conquered. Methodist preachers (who exist only in England) and all the short-sighted observers who have risked a judgment on Brummell, have portrayed him—nothing is more untrue—as a kind of doll lacking equally brain and heart; and in order to belittle the man still more they have belittled the period in which he lived as a time of folly. O labour in vain! O vain attempts! It is useless for them to strike at this period, so glorious for Great Britain, as the Florentines struck at the golden globe imprisoning the water they wished to compress. The rebellious element spurted through the sides rather than submit; and they

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* *Everyone drank, from the busiest to the idlest, from the* lazzaroni *of the drawing-rooms, the Dandies, to Ministers of State. 'To drink like Pitt and Dundas' has remained a proverb. When Pitt, that great soul which love of England filled but did not assuage, drank wine, his thirst was for variety. Strong men often seek change thus, but nature, alas, does not always permit it.*

have as much hope of reducing English society between 1794 and 1816 to the state of mere degeneracy. There are incomprehensible periods which resist everything brought against them. Does the great epoch of the Pitts, Foxes, Windhams, Byrons, Walter Scotts, become suddenly petty because it resounded with the name of Brummell ? If such an argument is absurd, then Brummell had in him something worthy of attracting and captivating the attention of a great epoch : attention, moreover, which is not attracted, like little birds to a mirror, by a decoy of elegant or splendid clothes. Brummell, who loved such, attached a great deal less importance than has been imagined to the art of the toilet as practised by the great Chatham.* His tailors, Davidson and Meyer, whom some have tried, with the stupidity of insolence, to prove the authors of his glory, in no sense occupied the place in his life which has been attributed to them. Listen rather to Lister, who paints a faithful likeness : ' It was repugnant to him to think that his tailors counted for anything in his fame ; he trusted to nothing but the exquisite charm of noble and polished ease, which he possessed in a remarkable degree.' At the time of his début, true, when he was preoccupied with exterior graces, at the moment when the democratic Charles Fox introduced (apparently for a dress effect) the red heel into English drawing-rooms, Brummell was engrossed with deportment in all its aspects. He was not ignorant of the influence, latent but positive, of costume on men who disdain it most from the majestic heights of intellect. But later, as Lister shows, he shook off this youthful preoccupation, nevertheless without destroying that in it

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* *The only historical personality who was great without simplicity.*

which conformed to experience and observation. He still continued to be perfectly dressed ; but he toned down the colour of his clothes, simplified the cut, wore them without consciousness of them.* He thus arrived at the summit of that art which extends a hand to nature ; but his methods of ensuring effect were of a higher quality, and this is what has been too much, far too much forgotten. Brummell has been considered as a purely physical being, whereas he was, on the contrary, an intellectual even in the species of beauty he possessed. He stood out, in fact, much less by the classicism of his lineaments than by his physiognomy. His hair was almost red, like Alfieri's, and a fall from a horse in a charge had spoiled the Greek line of his profile. His carriage of the head was more perfect than his features, and his bearing—the physiognomy of the body—than the shape of his limbs. Hear Lister : ' He was neither handsome nor plain ; but there was in his whole person an expression of concentrated fineness and irony, and in his eyes an incredible penetration.' Sometimes the shrewd eyes froze in an indifference devoid of scorn, as befits the consummate Dandy, the man who carries within him something superior to the visible world. His splendid voice rendered the English language as beautiful to the ear as to the eyes and to the mind. ' He did not affect short sight,' says Lister elsewhere, ' but when there were persons present who were not of the importance his vanity required, he could assume that composed yet roving expression which occasionally rests on a person without re-

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* *As if they were gossamer. A Dandy may, if he cares, spend ten hours over his toilet, but once dressed he forgets it. It is for others to perceive that he is well turned out.*

cognition, which neither fixes nor is fixed, which nothing concerns and nothing leads astray.' Such was the Beau, George Bryan Brummell. We who devote these pages to him have seen him in his old age, and realised then what he had been in his more splendid years ; for wrinkles have no power over expression, and a man remarkable above all for his physiognomy is much less mortal than another.

What his physiognomy promised his mind performed, and more. It was not for nothing that the divine spark played around his exterior presence. But merely because his intelligence, of a species infinitely rare, did not attach itself greatly to things which dominate the intelligence of other men, would it be just to deny it him ? He was in his own manner a great artist ; but his art was not esoteric, nor exercised in a given time. It was his very life, the perpetual glitter of faculties which do not dwell in man, a being created to live with his fellow-men. Brummell gave pleasure by his person as others do by their achievements. His values were instant. He drew from its torpor *—a difficult feat—a society bored to extinction, highly cultivated, a prey to every kind of weariness by reason of the nerves of ancient civilisation : and while thus engaged

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* *Without emerging from his own. In amiability, indeed, there is something too direct, too active for a Dandy to practise it wholly. A Dandy cannot admit eager interest in or anxiety about anything on earth. If, therefore, certain persons have risked the theory that Brummell was amiable on this evening or on that, it is because the blandishments of a powerful man can be extremely mediocre, yet appear irresistible. Such men are like pretty women, in whom one can find no fault : that is, naturally, if one is a man.*

he sacrificed no single jot of personal dignity. His least caprice was respected. Neither Etherege, nor Cibber, Congreve nor Vanbrugh could have introduced such a personage into their comedies, for ridicule could not ever touch him. If he did not disarm it by the power of his tact or defy it by the power of his aplomb, he was secured against it by the power of his wit : a shield which had a dart at its centre and could turn defence into attack. This one can understand better, perhaps. Those who are proof against a flying grace can feel a force which presses ; and the sway of Brummell over his period will seem less fabulous, less inexplicable, when one realises what is not sufficiently realised—the power of raillery which he possessed. Irony is a gift which can dispense with all others : it invests a man with a sphinx-like atmosphere which impresses the observer like a mystery and disturbs him like a danger.* This irony Brummell possessed, and he used it in a manner which froze all self-esteems even while he caressed them, and which heightened the thousand interests of superlative conversation by utilising that fear attaching to vanity which does not inspire wit, but which animates wit in those who possess it and quickens the blood of those who have it not. It is this genius for irony which made him the greatest hoaxer England has ever had. ' There was no menagerie-keeper,' says the author of *Granby*, ' more skilful at exhibiting the address of an ape than he was at revealing the grotesque side which every

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* ' *You are a palace in a labyrinth*,' *wrote a woman impatiently, weary of gazing in vain and seeking without discovery. She was unaware that she was expressing a principle of Dandyism. Actually not everyone can be the* palace, *but one can always be the* labyrinth.

man possesses more or less ; his talent for handling his victim and making him expose his imbecilities of his own accord from the best possible point of view was unequalled.' A slightly cruel pleasure, if you will ; but the Dandy is the product of a bored society, and to be bored does not make for charity.

This must not be lost sight of in judging Brummell. He was before everything a Dandy, and only his power need be considered. Singular tyranny, against which there was no revolt ! Like all Dandies he wished to astonish even more than to please : a very human preference, but one which takes men far afield, for the most attractive of astonishments is fear. On such a slope where is one to pull up ? Brummell alone had the secret. He distributed terror and charm in exactly equal measure, compounding from both the magic philtre of his influence. His indolence forbade him verve, for to manifest verve is to be impassioned ; to be impassioned is to hold to something ; and to hold to something is to confess inferiority. But he had, in cool blood, what we call in France *du trait.* He was as mordant in conversation as Hazlitt in writing. His wit crucified ; * but his impertinence was too spacious

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* *He did not fling his darts, he let them fall. The wit of the Dandy neither frisks nor sparkles, and has none of the quicksilver and flame of the wit of a Casanova, for example, or a Beaumarchais ; if by chance a Dandy employed the same sallies, he would enunciate them differently. It is useless for the Dandies to represent Caprice in a symmetrical and ordered society ; for all that, they breathe, however well organised they may be, the horrible contagion of Puritanism. They live in a Pest Tower, and such a dwelling is infectious. It is for this reason that they*

to be condensed and imprisoned in epigrams. He distilled the wit which expressed him into his actions, his gestures, his attitude, the tone of his voice. And above all he practised it with that incontestable superiority which it demands from men of breeding who would employ it ; for it leans towards rudeness as the sublime leans towards the ridiculous, and if it loses its exact tone it is lost. Impertinence, a genius perpetually half-veiled, has no need of wit to support it, and it exercises unaided a power of penetration entirely different from that of the most brilliantly prepared epigram. When it exists it is the greatest possible guarantee of respect against the so-often hostile vanity of others, as it is also the most elegant cloak with which one may conceal one's own infirmities. What need have those who possess it of anything else ? Has it not done more for the reputation of the Prince de Talleyrand's wit than his wit itself ? Impertinence, daughter of Levity and Assurance—two qualities which would seem incompatible—is also the sister of Grace, with whom she should remain united. Both are mutually embellished by contrast ; and indeed would not Grace without Impertinence appear a somewhat washed-out blonde ? Would not Impertinence without Grace appear a too-pungent brunette ? They must be mingled if they are each to assert her own qualities.

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so emphasise their dignity. They would think they had lost it probably if they abandoned themselves to fantasies of the mind. They live perpetually on their dignity, as on a bed of spikes ; a fact which, however supple one may be, tends to cramp liberty of movement and to cause an undue rigidity of bearing.

In this feat George Bryan Brummell succeeded better than anyone else. This man, too superficially estimated, was so intellectual a force that he reigned even more by his air than by his wit. His effect on others was more instantaneous than an effect exercised solely by words. He produced this effect by intonation, a look, a gesture, a transparent purpose, even by his silence : * which is one explanation of the few sallies he has left behind. These, moreover, judging by those preserved in memoirs of the time, either lack savour for us or possess it too strongly ; which is yet another way of lacking it. One feels in them the tart influence of the salt genius of the nation, which boxes and gets drunk, and does not fall into coarseness at a point where we, the French, cease to be delicate. Reflect on this : what is called exclusively *esprit* in the products of the mind, since it attaches directly to language, manners, social life, and circumstances which differ most between nation and nation, must die forlorn in the exile of translation. Even the expressions

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* *He played the conversational game too skilfully not to be often silent ; yet this silence was not so profound as the silence of him who wrote ' They stared at me, to discover if I comprehended their ideas on I know not what and their judgments on I know not whom. They probably took me for some mediocrity of the drawing-rooms, and I myself took pleasure in the opinion they presumably had of me. I thought of kings who preferred keeping their incognito.' This proud and solitary self-possession must be unknown to Dandies. The silence of Brummell was one more method of making his effect, the teasing coquetry of those who are sure of conquest and who know at which end desire catches flame.*

which characterise it in each nation are untranslatable, with any clarity, in the exactness of the sense they bear. Try, for example, to find the exact correlatives of *wit*, *humour*, *fun*, which constitute English *esprit* in its original triplicity. Wit, being changeable, like everything individual, cannot be transhipped from one language to another any more than poetry, which at least draws inspiration from common sentiments. Like certain wines which do not travel, it must be drunk in its own territory. But none the less, it cannot grow old, it is of the stuff of the most beautiful roses, which pass swiftly away ; and perhaps that is the secret of the pleasure it gives. God has often replaced longevity by intensity of living, in order that a generous love of things perishable might not die out of our hearts.

Therefore we shall not quote Brummell's *mots*. They would not justify his fame, yet they helped him to deserve it ; but the circumstances from which they sprang, which charged them with electricity, so to speak, are no more. Let us not stir or attempt to count these grains of sand which once were sparks, which Time has dispersed, after quenching them. Because there is diversity of parts, there are some reputations which are now no more than a strain heard amid silence, which must for ever nourish reveries and baffle thought.

But how can one avoid being struck by this deluge of renown falling upon a man so practical as Brummell—thrice practical, being vain, an Englishman, and a Dandy ? Like all positive personalities who do not live far outside themselves, who possess faith and will only for immediate pleasure, Brummell never desired more, and received it in full measure. Destiny paid him in the coin he most esteemed. Society gave him all the happiness at its command, and

for him there were no greater felicities : * for he was not of the opinion of Byron—now a renegade, now a backslider from Dandyism —that the world is not worth a single one of the joys it deprives us of. The world had certainly not deprived this particular eternally-intoxicated vanity of any of its joys. From 1799 to about 1814 there was no rout, no fashionable gathering in London at which the presence of the great Dandy was not regarded as a triumph and his absence as a catastrophe. The newspapers printed his name in advance, setting it before those of the most illustrious guests. At Almack's, at Ascot meetings, the whole world bowed beneath his dictatorship. He was the leading spirit of Watier's, of which Lord Byron was a member with Lord Alvanley, Mildmay, and Pierrepoint. He was the soul (is 'soul' the word ?) of the famous Brighton Pavilion, of Carlton House, of Belvoir. He was particularly intimate with Sheridan, with the Duchess of York, Erskine, Lord Townshend, and that passionate and singular Duchess of Devonshire, a poet in three languages, who kissed London butchers with her patrician lips to collect more votes for Mr. Fox : he imposed him-

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* *The moralists will rudely ask : 'Was he happy in this single good fortune of the world's, which deserves pity ?'—Why not? Satisfied vanity can suffice life as well as satisfied love.—'But ennui ?' Heavens above ! ennui, that wisp of straw, will snap any steel, be it never so well tempered in good fortune. It is at the root of everything, for everyone, much more for the soul of a Dandy, for one of those of whom it has been said most ingeniously, but with melancholy also : 'They surround themselves with the pleasures of life, but like a stone gathering moss, they are not penetrated by its refreshment.'*

self even on those who could judge him, who could have detected the hollowness of the obverse, had he really been nothing but a favourite of chance. It is said that Madame de Staël almost fretted over her failure to please him. Her all-powerful coquetry of mind was repulsed by the frigid soul and the eternal jesting of the Dandy, the capricious ice-cold creature who had excellent reasons for making a mock of enthusiasms. Corinne failed with Brummell as she did with Bonaparte; a comparison which sends one back to Lord Byron's *mot*, already quoted. Finally came an even more original success: another woman, Lady Hester Stanhope, the Arab amazon who galloped out of European civilisation and English routine—that ancient circus where life goes round and round—to whip up her sensations by peril in the independence of the desert—Lady Hester, after many years of exile, remembered of the civilised beings left behind her only one, the most civilised, perhaps: the Dandy, George Brummell.

Most certainly, when one counts up these vivid and ineffaceable impressions made on the first figures of the period, one is compelled to treat him who inspired them, were he merely a fop, with the serious consideration due to every man who takes men's imagination captive. The poets, in their reflection of their period alone, are all impregnated with Brummell. Moore has sung him—though what was Moore? * Brummell was possibly one of the Muses of *Don Juan*, invisible to the poet; for this strange poem exhales the essential atmosphere of Dandyism from beginning to end, and throws a strong light on our conception, such as it is, of the qualities and the

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* *Irish sentiment apart, a poet of pink papier-mâché.*

mind of Brummell. By these vanished qualities he rose above the horizon and maintained himself there. He never descended ; he fell, carrying with him in all its perfection a thing which since his time has never reappeared but in a degraded form. The stupidities of the Turk have replaced Dandyism. There is now nothing more in *high-life* than jockeys and dog-trainers.*

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* *There has been D'Orsay. But D'Orsay, a* lion *in the fashionable sense, possessing no less the beauty of those of the Atlas, was not a Dandy. Everyone has made the mistake. His was a nature infinitely more complex, more ample, and more human than the English type. It has been often said, but it must be said unceasingly : lymph, that kind of sluggish water which only foams into life when whipped by Vanity, is the physiological basis of Dandyism ; and D'Orsay had the red blood of France. He was a nervous, sanguine type with broad shoulders, with a chest* à la François I *and sympathetic good looks. His hand was superb without arrogance, and his manner of extending it arrested hearts and took them captive. That was not the haughty handshake of Dandyism. D'Orsay pleased the world so naturally and so wholeheartedly that even men carried miniatures of him ! whereas Dandies can only make men carry what you know, and* please women only by displeasing them. (*Do not overlook this nicety, when they have to be estimated.*) *D'Orsay, finally, was a king of amiability and benevolence ; whereas benevolence is a sentiment of which Dandies are entirely ignorant. Like them, true, he practised the art of the toilet, not strikingly but profoundly ; and it is for this reason, no doubt, that the superficial have regarded him as Brummell's successor. But Dandyism is not the rude art of tying a cravat. There are even Dandies who have never*

XI

Recording such a history as this, a mass of impressions rather than facts, one comes swiftly to the disappearance of the meteor and the end of this hardly credible romance, which is no fairy-tale, of which London Society was the heroine and Brummell the hero. In reality

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worn one—Lord Byron, for example, who had such a beautiful neck. And on the other hand D'Orsay was an artist. With the hand that he bestowed too freely—for coquetry reigns much more by means of refusals than rewards—he executed sculpture, and not as Brummell painted his fans, for false faces and empty heads. The marbles left by D'Orsay show thought. Add to this talent for sculpture the fact that he just missed being a writer, and that at thirty-three he had merited that letter from Byron to Alfred D. . . which is found in the famous Memoirs, in which Moore's cowardice has replaced names by asterisks and piquant anecdotes by rows of dots (an amiable man, Mr. Moore !). . . . Although a fop D'Orsay was loved by the most foppish *women of this time. One need not speak of natural women. There are never more than two or three in a century : why mention them ? He even inspired one lasting passion, which will remain historic. Dandies are only loved in* spasms. *Women, who detest them, give themselves to them none the less, and they enjoy the sensation, worth many pounds sterling to them, of crushing hatred in their arms. As for that charming duel of D'Orsay's, his flinging a plate at the head of an officer who spoke brutally of the Blessed Virgin and then fighting for her because she was a woman, and because he would not suffer disrespect to a woman in his presence—what is less Dandiacal, and more French ?*

the finale was a long time in arriving. Since facts—the historical measurement of a period—are lacking, let us take dates, and we may then judge the profundity of this influence by its duration. From 1793 to 1816 is twenty-two years. Now in the moral sphere, as in the physical, what is light is easily displaced. A continued success over so many years, therefore, shows that Brummell's existence satisfied a human necessity under the conventions of society. Hence when he was obliged later to leave England, the interest he had concentrated in his personality was not exhausted and enthusiasm continued to focus itself on him. In 1812, in 1813 he was more powerful than ever, notwithstanding the blows which play had dealt at his private fortune, the base of his elegance: for he was a mighty gambler. There is no need to discuss whether he found in his own organism or in the habits of the society with which he mingled that desire to beard the unknown and that thirst for adventure which produces gamblers and pirates. What is certain is that English society is even more arid of sensation than guineas, and that one can dominate a society only by sharing its passions. But beyond losses at play there was another reason, it seems, for the fall of Brummell: his quarrel with the Prince who had had such affection for him and who had been, so to speak, the only one of the two who had courted their relationship. The Regent was beginning to grow old. Stoutness, that polypus which seizes on beauty and strangles it slowly in its soft embrace, had overtaken him, and Brummell, with his implacable quips and with that tiger-like pride which success brings to human hearts, had sometimes laughed at the efforts of that elderly coquette to repair Time's damages, efforts which were making the Prince of Wales conspicuous.

Since there was a porter at Carlton House of immense corpulence who had received the nickname of *Big Ben*, Brummell must needs transfer the servant's name to the master, calling Mrs. Fitzherbert *Benina*. Such audacity of derision could hardly fail to stab vain souls to the quick, and Mrs. Fitzherbert was not the only woman in the Hereditary Prince's entourage to be angered by the familiarity of Brummell's ironies. This, we might say in passing, was the real cause of the disaster which suddenly overwhelmed the great Dandy. The story of the bell, which was at first told in order to explain it, is quite apocryphal, it would appear.* Captain Jesse, in refuting it, does not rely solely on Brummell's own denial, but also on the vulgar impudence it displays ; and he is right. Impudence was often found in the Dandy, but vulgarity never. And in any case one isolated fact, however expressive, is not so powerful a motive for disgrace as the hundred thousand poisoned darts flicked by Brummell in his most airy manner at the Regent's affections. What the husband of Caroline of Brunswick had borne, the lover of Mrs. Fitzherbert and Lady Conyngham could not tolerate.† And even had

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* *The story is this : Brummell, to win an extremely disrespectful wager, was supposed to have issued this order to the Prince of Wales one evening at supper : 'George, ring the bell!' The Prince, having obeyed, is said to have said to the servant who entered the room, with a nod in Brummell's direction : 'Take this drunkard to bed.'*

† *Brummell's influence, and even his jesting, was a great factor in the estrangement between the Prince of Wales and Caroline of Brunswick. It is well known that the famous wedding-night which the Prince spent on the carpet by the fire while his young wife awaited him under the*

he still tolerated it, had the favourite been allowed to wound the sultanas with impunity, the Prince, once attacked in his own physical person, his real *ego*, would never have suffered it without resentment. The ' Who's your fat friend ? ' uttered publicly by Brummell in Hyde Park and directed at His Royal Highness, and a cluster of other similar sallies, explain the whole situation much more than a breach of manners mitigated, in any case, by a wager.

But at this time (towards 1813) neither the vindictive coldness of

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ostrich plumes of the nuptial couch, had been preceded by a supper of Dandies. These practical personalities did not love the misty sentimentalism which materialised a little afterwards, but which Caroline had then brought over in her baggage from Germany ; and beyond this, was she not the legitimate wife, in the country of official conjugal happiness and pourers-out of tea ? Dandyism on the other hand, loving the unforeseen and loathing the pedantry of the domestic virtues, would prefer any misfortune at the hands of a mistress to the imperturbable and public happiness of Lord and Lady Grey, for example, so extolled by Madame de Staël. The Dandies, who jostled these legal good fortunes in England, have not and cannot share the opinions of Mme. de Staël, who scarcely encountered them in the drawing-rooms of Paris. It is distance that makes for poetry, and the imagination must always have its chimeras ; but when the woman who portrayed herself in Corinne, who loved D . . ., who loved C . . ., who loved T . . . ., caresses a chimera of the kind she is less sincere in heart and imagination than the Dandies, and Madame de Staël descends to a state of being nothing more than the daughter of Madame Necker.

the Prince nor losses at play had yet shaken Brummell's position. The hand which had served to raise him to his elevation had not caused him to fall when it withdrew itself, and the opinion of the drawing-rooms remained faithful. This was not sufficient. The Regent, with malevolence, contemplated a half-ruined Dandy arrogantly exercising influence against him, the most highly-placed man in Great Britain. Anacreon-Archilochus Moore, who did not invariably write on sky-blue paper and whose Irish temper sometimes found the word which stabs most keenly, placed in the mouth of the Prince of Wales these lines, addressed to the Duke of York and quoted everywhere :

> ' Neither have I resentments, nor wish there should come ill
> To mortal—except (now I think on't) Beau Brummell,
> Who threatened, last year, in a superfine passion,
> To cut *me*, and bring the old King into fashion.'

Do not these offensive lines justify what the King of the Dandies said to Colonal MacMahon, referring to the Royal Dandy : ' I made him what he is, and I can very well unmake him ' ? And do they not stand as evidence of the extent of the power which this Warwick of the elegances exercised of himself, and to what extent he was independent and sovereign ? A still more blazing proof of this power was afforded in this year 1813 by the Committee of Watier's, who in the course of making arrangements for an important festivity seriously deliberated the propriety of inviting the Prince of Wales, solely on account of his quarrel with Brummell. Brummell, who well knew how to mingle impertinence even with his generosities, insisted stubbornly that the Prince should be invited. Without

any doubt he was charmed to see opposite him, at his own table (for he was of the Club) the host he saw no more at Carlton House, and to bring about this face to face meeting in the presence of all the *jeunesse dorée* of England. But the Prince, unworthy of himself in this meeting and forgetting his pretensions to be an accomplished gentleman, ignored even the duties imposed on a guest by the law of hospitality, and Brummell, who had hoped to oppose Dandyism with Dandyism, responded to his sulking with that elegant frigidity which he wore like a suit of armour and which rendered him invulnerable.*

Of all the clubs in England Watier's was the one most given over to high play. Painful scandals occurred there. Its members, *blasés*, flushed with mulled port, devoured by the *taedium vitae*, gathered there each night to foment the mortal boredom of their days and whip their Norman blood—that blood which boils only in acquisition or pillage—by risking the most magnificent fortunes on a throw of the dice. Brummell, as we have seen, was the star of this famous club. He would not have been so had he not plunged into the thick of the play and wagering which went on there ; but he was

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* *Perhaps it would be more correct to say*, which made him believe himself invulnerable. *But Cleopatra's lovely sigh of weariness in Shakespeare :*

'Tis sweating labour
To bear such idleness so near the heart,'

is stifled in a Dandy's bosom. These Stoics of the boudoir absorb under their mask the blood of their wounds, and remain masked. To appear is to be, *for Dandies as for women.*

actually neither more nor less a gambler than any of the others who sought excitement in this delightful Pandemonium, where immense sums were lost with that perfect indifference which was to a Dandy on such occasions what the reprieve was to gladiators vanquished in the circus. Many, neither more nor less than Brummell, suffered the vagaries of fortune in every sense ; but many were able to challenge it longer. Although skilful by coolness and habit, he could do nothing against Chance, which was to checkmate the good fortune of his life and bring his last days to poverty. In 1814 the arrival in London of many foreigners, Russian and Prussian officers of the armies of Alexander and Blücher, added fuel to the fires of gambling among the English. It brought to Brummell the moment of disaster. There was an adventitious side to his renown and his position by which one and the other were to be brought down. Like all gamblers, he attacked his bad luck doggedly, and was conquered. He had recourse to moneylenders and became engulfed in debt. It has even been said that he compromised his dignity ; but nothing precise has been brought forward to support this. What might have authorised certain rumours, perhaps, was the fact that he was endowed with dangerous qualities which, for the sake of a pose, may have need even of base actions,* and that he sometimes abused

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* *Such qualities have always been too strong for their possessors. Consider, for instance, Henri IV, the Duke of Orleans (the Regent), Mirabeau, etc. Henri IV had them only in a small degree, true ; but the Regent Orleans had them largely, Mirabeau enormously. Mirabeau brought as much pride to stirring up filth as Orleans brought gaiety and grace to facing contamination. Was it not the latter who* spiritualised

them. Thus, for example, it was remembered that he was seen, in his last financial straits, to accept a quite considerable sum of money from a man who wished to make a figure among the Dandies by having a claim on the man they recognised as their leader. Later, on being asked to pay the money back in the midst of a large company, Brummell tranquilly informed the importunate creditor that he had already been paid. ' Paid ? When ? ' asked the lender in surprise. And Brummell answered in his ineffable manner, ' Why, when I was in the window of White's, and said to you as you passed, " *Well, Jemmy, how are you ?* " ' Such a repartee carried elegance to the verge of cynicism, and it does not require many such to make those who overhear them cease to take the trouble to be just.

But the hour when one is no more fair to anyone, the hour of misfortune, was about to strike for Brummell. His ruin was complete, and he knew it. With all his Dandy's impassibility he had calculated, watch in hand, the time he should remain on the field of battle, on the scene of the most admirable successes a man of the world has ever enjoyed ; and he was resolved to display no humiliation after his glory. He acted like those proud coquettes who prefer to leave the loved one, rather than be left by one who loves them no more. On May 16th, 1816, after dining off a capon from Watier's, he

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kicks on the posterior ? And what kicks ? Kicks from the goat-foot of Dubois ! They were more blameworthy, these profaners of charming qualities, than Brummell, for they were not faced, as he was, with a Puritan society : a thing which explains every excess and justifies many faults.

finished a bottle of claret *—Byron drank two before replying to the *Edinburgh Review* article with his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* —and wrote, without hope and nonchalantly, as a ruined man tries his luck, this letter, which has already been cited :

My dear Scrope,

Send me two hundred pounds. The Bank is closed and all my money is in the Three per Cents. I will return it to-morrow morning.

Yours,

George Brummell.

Scrope Davies answered him immediately in this note, Spartan in laconism and friendship :

My dear George,

It is most unfortunate, but all my money is in the Three per Cents too.

Yours,

Scrope.

Brummell was too much of a Dandy to be wounded by such a note. He was not the sort of man to moralise on it, says Captain Jesse wittily. He had become, through his gambler's love for the freaks of chance, a leaf drifting on a flood, and the flood was now carrying him away. Scrope's reply was cruelly dry, but it was not vulgar ;

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* *Systematic, and physiologically English. Moral courage is decided like physical. The English are bad soldiers if they are badly fed. Wellington's glory is that he was invariably an excellent contractor.*

and as between Dandy and Dandy honour remained safe and sound. Brummell made a stoical toilet, and the same evening appeared at the Opera ; like the Phoenix on its funeral pile, but more admirable, for he knew he was not to rise again from his ashes. Who among those who saw him would have known him for a stricken man ? The carriage he ordered after the Opera was a post-chaise. On the 17th he was at Dover ; on the 18th he had left England. A few days after his departure there was sold by auction, by order of the Sheriff of Middlesex, the elegant household appointments of a Man of Fashion ' having left for the Continent,' as the sale catalogue phrased it. The purchasers were all that was most fashionable in London and most distinguished in Society. Among them were noticed the Duke of York, Lords Yarmouth and Besborough, Lady Warburton, Sir H. Smyth, Sir H. Peyton, Sir W. Burgoyne, Colonels Sheddon and Cotton, General Phipps, etc. All wanted, and paid for like the English when they want, these precious relics of a vanished luxury, these objects consecrated by taste, these frail accessories touched and half worn out by Brummell. What brought most money from this opulent crowd, to whom the superfluous had become the necessary, were precisely those things which had the least value ; those knick-knacks which exist only through the hand which has chosen and the caprice which has given them birth. Brummell was reputed to possess one of the most extensive collections of snuffboxes in England. Somebody opened one, and found inside, written by his hand : ' I intended this box for the Prince Regent, if he had behaved a little better towards me.' The artlessness of such a phrase makes it still more impertinent. Only petty fatuities lack simplicity.

Having reached Calais, that ' asylum for English debtors,' Brummell sought means of mitigating his exile. He had carried with him in his flight some débris of his magnificent past, and such remains of an English fortune were almost a fortune in France. He rented in the house of a bookseller of the town an apartment which he furnished with sumptuous fancy, in a manner which recalled his boudoir of Chesterfield Street and his salons of Chapel Street, Park Lane. His friends, if one may be permitted to set down a word of such sincerity, for a Dandy's friends are always to some extent the cicisbeos of friendship, contributed to the expenses of his living, which for some time was marked with a certain display. The Duke and Duchess of York, with whom he had become more closely intimate after his rupture with the Prince of Wales, Mr. Chamberlayne, and several others, then and later, came very nobly to the aid of the fallen Beau, demonstrating thus, and more eloquently than ever, the strength of the impression he had made on all who had known him. He was pensioned by men he had charmed, as a writer or a political orator is sometimes pensioned by a party whose opinions they have represented. This liberality, which carries with it in English eyes no sense of degradation, was not new. Had not Chatham received a considerable sum from the old Duchess of Marlborough for a speech in Opposition, and had not Burke himself, who had not Chatham's breadth and who employed bombast in morals as in eloquence, accepted from a Minister, the Marquis of Rockingham, an estate which made him eligible for Parliament ? What was new was the reason for this liberality. The world showed its gratitude for a pleasure felt as for a service rendered, and it was right ; for is not the greatest service one can render a listless society to procure it a little pleasure ?

But there was something more astonishing still than this example of a gratitude which is always rare. The ascendancy of the Dandy had not died from the blow of his withdrawal; it survived his departure. The drawing-rooms of Great Britain were as much occupied with Brummell in exile as with Brummell in London, dictating his laws to a world which submits to those who love it, but crushes those who fly it. Public deference pierced the fog, crossed the Channel, and reached Brummell on the other shore, in the foreign haven of his refuge. The fashionable world made many pilgrimages to Calais. There were seen there the Dukes of Wellington, Rutland, Richmond, Beaufort, Bedford; Lords Sefton, Jersey, Willoughby de Eresby, Craven, Ward, and Stuart of Rothesay. Brummell, superb as in London, preserved all the idiosyncrasies of his exterior life. Lord Westmoreland, passing through Calais one day, sent him a message announcing that he would be happy to see him at dinner, and that dinner would be at three o'clock. The Beau replied that he never ate at that hour, and dismissed his Lordship. For the rest he lived the monotonous routine of the leisured English on the Continent, in a solitude broken only by his compatriots' visits. Although he did not affect aristocratic hauteur or misanthropy, his courtesy wore so high an air that it did not greatly attract those with whom his fate had brought him in contact. He remained a foreigner in language,* and more so by the habits of his past. A Dandy is more

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* *The jest of Scrope Davies is well known, and Byron paid it the honour of an echo in one of his poems: 'Like Napoleon in Russia, Brummell when he attempted French was vanquished by the* elements." *That is too strong, but it is a joke. He remained, it is true, faulty and*

insular than an Englishman, for London Society is an island within an island, and moreover it is not necessary to be over-pliable to attain distinction in it. However, in spite of his slightly haughty reserve,* he resisted advances less when they took the covering form of a good dinner. His love of the table, which was a cultivated taste and as exacting as a passion, had always been one of the most developed aspects of his sybaritism. This sensuality, common enough among men of intellect, made his vanity less intractable ; but his incomparable self-possession covered all. ' Who is that bowing to you, Sefton ? ' he said to Lord Sefton during a walk in the street ; it was the honest provincial at whose table he, Brummell, had dined that very day, who had bowed to *him*.

He lived in Calais for several years. Under the veneer of that vanity which appeared always in full dress it is probable that he hid many chagrins ; among all the others, intellectual deprivations. He had been supremely a man of conversation, and conversation had

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English in our tongue, like all whose mouths are accustomed to the mastication of the Saxon pebble and to speaking by the seashore ; but his manner of speaking French, corrected by good breeding if not by the fitness of the words he chose, and his irreproachably gentlemanly *manner, lent what he said a strange foreign distinction and a serious originality, yet piquant, which was not to his disadvantage.*

* *Dandies never completely break away from the original Puritanism within them. However great their elegance, it never has the* undress *of Richelieu's, and never goes as far as forgetfulness of all reserve. ' In London, when one is prepossessing,' said the Prince de Ligne, ' one is taken for a foreigner.'*

become impossible for him.* His wit, which had need of the sparks of another's to take fire, rested without resources. Bitter desolation, which Madame de Staël also experienced ! The thought that

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* *One may* speak *several languages, but* conversation *is reserved for one. Even Paris could not have replaced London for Brummell ; and in any case, Paris is now no more the home of conversation than any other town. Conversation has practically ceased to exist there, and Mme. de Staël would hardly care for her* stream of the Rue du Bac *any more. In Paris one thinks too much about the money one does not possess, and esteems oneself too much the equal of everybody else, to make conversation. Wit is no more scattered from the windows than anything else. In London the interests of a fortune to be made agitate and dominate many minds, but at a certain high level one finds a society which can think about worthier things ; and there is also rank and social distinctions—whether good or bad is not the question here—and this is what causes wit to froth, by compression. In such a society what subtlety is necessary to be impertinent, what elegance to ensure a politeness giving pleasure ! The difficulty finds its hero. But in Paris the life of the salons is too easy ; one goes in, one goes out. Writers and artists, who should stir the minds of others, or at least, should keep their own covered with a film of gold-filings from their work, are as dull in society as any mediocrities. After a tiring day's thinking, or seeming to think, they go into society in the evenings to relax their minds by listening to music which throws them into reveries like fakirs, or by drinking tea like Chinese. I know of only one exception. . . .*

Brummell came to Paris, but did not stay. What could he have done there ? He no longer possessed luxury, which would have lent him charm

he still extended his prestige as far as London, that the most fashionable figures of the world he had relinquished came from time to time to bring him some remembrance, mingled with an insatiable curiosity, was not sufficient to compensate him for what he had lost. But a Dandy's vanity, when it suffers, is almost pride : it becomes as dumb as shame. Who has placed this to the account of this frivolous man ? Not knowing, possibly, how to occupy his faculties, henceforth useless, he threw himself into a correspondence with the Duchess of York, for whom he painted a most complicated screen, with figures invented by himself. At Belvoir, at Oatlands, everywhere, the Duke and Duchess of York had loaded him with favour ; now, after the treachery of fortune, the Duchess showed him a depth of feeling which cast a glow of real tenderness over this brilliant, arid life.* Brummell never forgot this. It even seems that but for the

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had he been as doltish and ugly as Prince T. . . . He had only fine manners, whose significance dwindles little by little as the days go on. No one would have understood anything of the past of such a man : a sad realisation for him, a sad spectacle for the others ! Mme. Guiccioli presented the same spectacle ; yet she was a woman, and when a woman is in question our opinions always take to themselves sex and nerves.

** This feel ıg is singular. Friendship is non-existent between women —why is not truth always original ?—and a Dandy is a woman in certain aspects. When he is that no longer, he becomes worse for women than a woman ; he is one of those monsters whose head rules their heart. Even in friendship this is detestable. In Dandyism there is something cold, sober, mocking, and, though guarded, instantaneously mobile, which*

friendship of the Duchess, to whom he had promised never to reveal what he knew of the private life of the Regent, he might have published his Memoirs and thus recovered his fortune ; for the London booksellers proposed immense sums to him as the price of his indiscretions. This silence, extremely delicate in either case, whether the Duchess had made him keep it or whether he kept it himself, had no great effect on the thick egotism of George IV. It is true that when he passed through Calais to visit his kingdom of Hanover in 1821, he allowed with the inertness of a surfeited soul some sort of arrangements to be made around him for a reconciliation ; but Brummell took only a half-hearted cognisance of these official manœuvres. Since *vanity never quits us, even on the wheel*, he had no desire to request an audience of the King, who was nothing in his eyes but a

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must be intensely shocking to those dramatic tear-machines to whom emotion is more precious than tenderness. In extreme youth, for example, the odiousness of Puritanism affects them less : very grave young men please very young women. Being the dupes of a pose and, very often, of an embarrassment which strains itself in order to pass unperceived, they dream of profundities while facing the void. Faced with a Dandy, in lightness of mind, they similarly imagine that other lightness of which mothers talk, compressing their lips, before their daughters. Nevertheless in spite of this, or perhaps on account of it—since those they do not dominate, dominate them—they can very well fall in love with an insupportable Dandy. Generally speaking, who is there in life with whom one cannot fall in love ? But here we are concerned only with friendship, that is to say, much more with a choice than with a sympathy.

Dandy much inferior to himself. Being placed in George's path, he kept himself there with painful constraint. The former boon-companion of Carlton House beheld him without that species of emotion with which one finds a companion of one's youth, that smiling regret of the past—a poetry within the reach of the vulgarest. At a later moment, when George was offered a snuffbox which he recognised as having formed part of the famous Brummell collection, he ordered Brummell to be presented to him, and fixed the hour for the reception next day. What would have happened had they met? Would the *King of Calais*, as Brummell was called, have returned to reign in London? However, the next day despatches forced George IV to advance the hour of his departure, and Brummell was forgotten perfectly. His lack of enthusiasm had been at least equal to the indifference of the Prince. Such an indolent distaste for making any advance to the King of England was a mistake, when it is considered from the viewpoint of life's politics; but if Brummell had not acted thus he would have been less a Brummell.*

After this George IV never again mentioned the Dandy he had seen in Calais, but relapsed into the torpor of his own thoughts. Nor did Brummell utter any complaint; he preserved the firm, discreet silence which is the good taste of pride. Yet the events which

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* *Involuntarily one thinks of the divine lines in* Sardanapalus :

> '*If at this moment,—for we now are on*
> *The brink,—thou feel'st an inward shrinking from*
> *This leap through flame into the future, say it :*
> *I shall not love thee less ; nay, perhaps more,*
> *For yielding to thy nature.*'

followed might have provoked many recriminations in a weaker soul. In a very short time his resources from England ran dry ; debts accumulated, and with them came want. He began the descent down the staircase of exile into poverty of which Dante speaks. At the bottom he was to find prison, beggary, and a lunatic asylum to die in. The hand which stopped him while yet on the first downward steps was royal, the hand of William IV, whose government created a consulate at Caen and gave it to Brummell. The post, carrying a meagre salary at first, later carried no salary at all, having collapsed under the disdainful incapacity * of Brummell to fill it.† He was later deprived of it. When governments, which should be able to estimate a man, give him a place against the grain of his vocation, do they conceive that they have done much for him ? The period Brummell spent at Calais was one of the longest phases of his life. The aristocracy of the town showed him, by their welcome and the consideration with which they surrounded him, that the ancestors of the English were Normans. This might alleviate, but it could not

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* *The disdainful* impossibility *would be more correct.*

† *He needed men to charm, and they gave him business to transact. If caprice and the mad good fortune of half his life had not made him incapable of everything in the nature of public functions and duties, he possessed perhaps certain diplomatic faculties which might have been utilised. We say* perhaps ; *and do not emphasise it. Lord Palmerston has amply shown what Dandyism can become in politics when it is alone. Henri de Marsay is a tempting fantasy, but his destiny was created by a poet. We do not say he is impossible, but he is the least possible of romantic heroes.*

banish the miseries which lacerated his last days. Captain Jesse has counted the total of these humiliations and sorrows ; we will keep silence. Why should they be recounted ? It is the Dandy we are studying, his influence, his public life, his social rôle. What does the rest matter ? A man dying of hunger emerges from the affectations of any society whatsoever and re-enters human life ; he ceases to be a Dandy.* Let us leave all that. But let us do Brummell this

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* *Did Brummell ever cease to be one ? One day a Venetian who was then content to be the Casanova of music and has since become its Gustave Planche—M. P. Scudo, now of the* Revue des Deux Mondes— *was giving a concert at Caen, one of those concerts in which, as actor and musician, he displayed a brilliance sufficient to give imbeciles lockjaw, if imbeciles were nervous. He wished to have the exiled Dandy at his soirée, for the Dandy was still a power in the Rue Guillebert. Having met him at a friend's house he invited him to be there, and drawing from his pocket a packet of tickets (nearly three hundred in all) he spread them out like a pack of cards in order to offer him one or two ; when, with a sovereign air, and with the simplicity of a Dandy to whom the world belongs, Brummell took the lot with one gesture. ' He never paid for them,' said M. Scudo, ' but the thing was executed admirably, and I had for my money one more impression of the English.'*

It was shortly afterwards that Brummell became insane, and as Dandyism, stronger than reason, had penetrated his entire being, his madness took the timbre of Dandyism. His passion for elegance turned to mania. He no more removed his hat in the street when bowed to, for fear of disarranging his wig, and returned salutes with his hand, like Charles X. He lived at the Hotel d'Angleterre ; and on certain days,

justice; he was a Dandy also, as much as a man can be in poverty and hunger. The dominant faculty within him remained a long time towering over the ruins of his life. His others, which only existed to support this one by harmonising with it, could do nothing for his fame and not much for his happiness. Thus—he was a poet. He had in him just the degree of imagination necessary for a man whose

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to the great astonishment of the staff, he ordered his apartment to be prepared as for a festivity. Nothing was lacking, lustres, candelabra, candles, masses of flowers ; and he himself, in the blaze of all the lights, wearing the full dress of his youth, the Whig blue dress-coat with golden buttons, the piqué waistcoat, and the tight black trousers, clinging like the hose of the sixteenth century, stood in the centre, expectant . . . awaiting a dead England. Suddenly, and as if he were divided in two, he announced in a loud voice the Prince of Wales, then Lady Conyngham, then Lord Yarmouth, then all the high personages of England for whom he had been the living Law ; and imagining them to appear as he announced them, and changing his voice, he went to the doors to receive them ; the open double doors of the empty salon through which, alas, no one was to pass on this or any other evening. And he saluted these chimeras of his imagination, offered his arm to the women of this company of phantoms he had called up and who would certainly not have cared to leave their tombs for one instant to attend the fallen Dandy's rout. This lasted a long time. . . . Finally, when the room was full of these ghosts and when all the company had arrived from the other world, reason suddenly re-asserted itself, and the unhappy creature perceived his illusion and madness. And then he would fall stricken into one of the solitary chairs, and would be discovered weeping.

vocation is to please ; but what poetry he left behind, remarkable though it is for a Dandy, would not make the name of a man of letters.* We need not therefore consider it. In this study of a man so distinctive in his own manner, all that does not pertain to his vocation, the finger of God upon the intelligence, may be left to one side.

XII

We know now what that vocation was and how he fulfilled it. He was born to rule by certain very positive faculties, though Montesquieu one day, in a fit of vexation, called them the *je ne sais quoi*, instead of showing what they are. It was by these that Brummell led his epoch. As the Prince de Ligne might have said, ' He was

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At the Bon Sauveur Hospital his attacks were less touching. His illness grew worse and took on a character of degradation which seemed to be a vengeance for the elegance of his life. It is impossible to relate any of this. Frightful irony of that terrible Jester who lies hidden at the bottom of things and ends by having his turn in the frivolous existence of those who have jested most at his expense ! The pavilion at the Bon Sauveur took payment for Brighton Pavilion. Between these two lies his career.

** Captain Jesse, whom it will be necessary to mention in future every time Brummell is in question, has quoted in his book some lines by the Dandy. Brummell wrote them in a superb album in which Sheridan, Byron, even Erskine, had written some of theirs. They are not at all album-verses, a few lines scribbled in haste, but fairly long pieces with a certain amount of inspiration.*

king by the grace of Grace' ; but on conditions which oblige us, seekers after influence, to accept the prejudices and even, up to a point, the vices of his time. Here is a sad avowal for chaste lovers of Truth in all things : if his elegance had been more sincere it would not have been so powerful, would not have seduced and led captive an artificial society. And to what pitch of refinement and civilisation and secret corruption is English society in fact arrived for a phrase like this, uttered concerning a Dandy like Brummell, to be profound and just : 'He gave offence too generally not to be courted.' * Does one not recognise in such a phrase that need for a beating which sometimes seizes powerful and profligate women ? Could elegance alone, in its simplicity and spontaneity, be a sufficiently strong stimulant to move a society drained of sensation and strangled by every kind of prejudice ? If one rested absolutely oneself in such a world, what would be one's fate ? To be barely perceived by a few choice souls who had remained uncorrupt and disinterested †—a public, alas ! uncertain enough. But we are vain, we need the approbation of others ; a charming instinct of the human heart which has been too much decried. This is perhaps the whole explanation of the affectations of Dandyism. It would be, then, once and for all, nothing more than grace which falsifies itself

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* *Bulwer, in* Pelham.

† *Like Miss Cornell, the actress so lauded by Stendhal, for example. But it needed a Stendhal to perceive the simple greatness of such a soul, as rare in London as a black diamond ; that is to say, it needed a man as positive in spirit as a Machiavelli, but a lover of the natural as certain Roman emperors were lovers of the impossible.*

to make a better impression on a false society ; * in this sense no more than artlessness—much compromised, it is true, but imperishable.

We have said it at the beginning of this study : on the day when the society which produced Dandyism becomes transformed, there will be no more Dandyism ; and as aristocratic and Protestant England, in spite of an attachment to an ancient morality which resembles a deathly servitude, has already become greatly modified during the last twenty years, Dandyism is hardly more than the tradition of a past day. Who would have believed it—or rather, who would have been unable to foresee it ? This modification has taken the direction of an invariable downward slope. England, a victim of her historical past, having made one step forward, draws back to seat herself in the past. However much sail she may carry on the sea of Time, she actually—like the *Corsair* of her greatest poet

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* *Which lacks the instinct for the fine arts ; for this lack is evident. The names of Lawrence, Romney, Reynolds and some others only illustrate it the more. The Romans were not artists because they had flute-players among them. Art in England exists only in literature. Their Michael-Angelo is Shakespeare. Since everything in this original country is singular, the best sculptor it has produced was a woman, Lady Hamilton, who was worthy of being an Italian, and who, in a pose, carved in the marble of the most beautiful body which has ever throbbed. Strange sculptor, equally the statue, whose masterpieces died with her ; a passing glory which endured only for the agitation of a life and the ardent emotions of a few days ! Here is one more page to be written, but where could one find the pen of a Diderot to write it ?*

—never breaks the chains which moor her to the shore. For her, who holds all and preserves all, *marble to retain*, habit is a tyrant of a strange kind. For her the seventh skin of the serpent is always similar to the first one sloughed. One imagines the traces of what is no more have all vanished, one writes on this palimpsest, and it needs only the occasion to make the apparently-effaced reappear, legible, clear, brilliant. To-day Puritanism, with which Dandyism with the arrows of its light mockery waged a Parthian war, flying before it rather than attacking face to face, Puritanism, once wounded, is arising and dressing its wounds. After Byron, after Brummell, these two ironists of such different calibre, but perhaps of equal influence, who would not have believed that the old smugness of England lay defeated ? Well, but it is not so. Immortal, imperturbable Cant has conquered once more. Amiable Fantasy can but spray her blood, like attar of roses, towards the sky ; she succumbs to the stubbornness of a people which is indomitably a creature of habit, to the absence of those great writers who electrify imaginations and inspire them with every audacity,* and finally to the influence on high society of a queen who brandishes conjugal happiness as Elizabeth did virginity. What better sources of hypocrisy and pessimism ? Methodism, which passed from manners into politics, is now passing back from politics into manners. Has not a poet, a man of lineage, deriving from his birth the very facile courage

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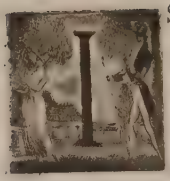
* *This absence of writers is not complete, since there is Thomas Carlyle : but what a pity that he so often prefers the sedative ether of German transcendentalism to that tart caviar so appreciated by the English, and affording such exquisite sensations !*

of holding an independent opinion as he could equally look to his talent for real inspiration—has not Lord John Manners just published a volume of poetry in honour of the Established Church of England ? Shelley, the atheist, would no more enjoy even the security of exile. Liberalism of ideas, which had shone like a ray of the intelligence of its greatest men upon this country of stiff Pharisaism and cold, deceitful conventions, shone only for a brief moment ; the mummy of sentimental religiosity and formalism reigns over it eternally from the depths of its whited sepulchre. All is dead and finished of that superb society whose idol Brummell was, because he was its very expression in all things worldly, in all phases of pure pleasure. We shall not see another Dandy like Brummell ; but one can affirm that there will always be men after his pattern, even in England, whatever livery society clothes them with. They attest the magnificent variety of the Divine handiwork ; they are as eternal as caprice. Humanity has as much need of them and their attraction as of its most imposing heroes, its austerest grandeurs. They afford intelligent beings the pleasure which is their right. They enter into a society's well-being as other men enter into its morals. These double, multiple natures, of an indecisive intellectual sex, in whom grace becomes more graceful through power, and power finds itself once more in grace, are the Androgynes of History, no more fabulous, of whom Alcibiades was the most exquisite type in the most perfect of nations.

A Precursor of the Dandies



S this study of Dandyism, and of the man who resumes it most particularly and irreductibly in his own person, complete? Does it give a sufficient idea of the profoundly English and *insular* nature of Dandyism? However English it may be, one has nevertheless observed that this thing is not exclusively a phenomenon of Society—a *monstrosity*, as Puritans and gentle hearts might say, meeting for once on common ground. Dandyism has its roots in the human nature of every nation and every age, for vanity is universal. What one might call the *chord of Dandyism* sleeps, ready to awake, in the centre of the thirty-six thousand chords which compose that deuced extraordinary instrument, so complicated, often so crazy, which is human nature. It is in England that it has resounded most. We have cited Richelieu and compared him with Brummell in order to make apparent the differences set between these two fops, constructed on the same framework, by Society and the Race. Richelieu in fact possessed the *chord of Dandyism*, but in him its vibrations were drowned by others more powerful. Yet there was a Dandy, a precursor of the Dandies like Richelieu, even before the thing was given a name, before any observers had brought a superfine analysis to the study of it as a thing in itself: and this was Lauzun—a stronger man than Richelieu, although he may not have taken Port Mahon.

He took a fortress more difficult: the Grande Mademoiselle. He

took her single-handed, which Richelieu did not do with Port Mahon. And let this be noted : he took her by the power of Dandyism in him, though he did not know it, nor she either. Lauzun was worthy of being an Englishman. Had he been, he would have been one of the most magnificent of English Dandies. He had the English egotism, the most terrible which has existed since the Roman. In his deportment, his finely graduated originality, his assumption of being of a different species from others, when all others were equals before Louis XIV ; in his cool self-possession and self-control, in his love of the unexpected in conduct (for one of the characteristics of Dandies is never to do what one expects of them), Lauzun was a Dandy. He possessed the ruthless, tigerish vanity of the Dandies. Remember the scene (in Saint-Simon's *Memoirs*) where he places his heel on a duchess's hand—heels were worn high under Louis XIV, like women's heels to-day (1879)—and executes a pirouette on that heel in order to drive it into the flesh, like a drill. It is a scene to make a nervous reader cry aloud. A fine study might be written of Lauzun, had it not been done already ; as it has been, and—consummate good fortune of fatuity !—by the princess who of all women most wildly loved him. This Cæsar Borgia towards women, and to this one woman above all, this Borgia who could have instructed Machiavelli, had no need to write his Commentaries like Cæsar the Great. They have been written by the woman he conquered, the princess who adored him, whom he injured, and who continued to adore him : whereas Brummell's only historians are Captain Jesse and myself.

There are exquisite pages in the *Memoirs* of Mademoiselle de Montpensier giving the measure of Lauzun, this Dandy before

Dandyism, this Englishman of France. They are equal to a novel of Stendhal ; and certainly this, and nowhere else, is the place to discuss them.

II

The Grande Mademoiselle stands forth in these pages a woman of a princely originality to-day unknown, and of a range of feeling almost incomprehensible to our flat-footed age. I find in her a fine trait of a past age : a proud respect for oneself and one's race, which is greater than oneself. She was more a Bourbon than a woman ; and I can now understand that she was content to show discoloured teeth, because they were the teeth of her House.

Until Lauzun's appearance on the scene her *Memoirs* betray no flutter of the heart for any one, no desire but that of contracting marriage with the old Emperor of Germany, solely because he is an Emperor. She is paid court to by Charles II, king of England, then in France, and remains unmoved. With a calm eye she sees the matrimonial card-castles collapse all round her, for she is preoccupied only with the principle that a daughter of the House of France must not allow herself to stoop. If, as some say, she cherished any thought of her first cousin Louis XIV, no trace of it appears in her *Memoirs*. Pride imposes silence on pride.

This princess of *substance*, this personality whom only etiquette could affect, this creature of ceremonial who had no eye save for greatness—a theatrical greatness, one of opinion (the *honour* of Montesquieu)—discovers, towards the age of forty-three, something which is turning her head for a man. The medlar is ripe. For a virgin of forty-three, a virgin absolute—probably intact even from

curiosity—what a passion that should be ! And a passion described by herself ! It should be a wonderful volume, and it is . . . for connoisseurs.

III

We are here very far from Rousseau's cynicism and modern frankness ; but nevertheless look at her ! She is naïve, in her way. She is true to her pride. She magnifies the man she loves : but she does not go beyond this magnification. It is plain that in her eyes it was impossible for the man for whom, at the age of forty-three, she was about to experience a love of which nothing in her life had given her any conception, to be anything but superior to all the rest ; and in the court of the great King, then young and dazzling as a Mayday sun, it was a difficult thing to excel all others in wit, manners, and good looks. But Lauzun's superiority in that age of Convention in which everything was alike, is an extraordinary thing : it is what we should now call (for the word did not then exist) originality. Before falling in love with him Mademoiselle is already struck with Lauzun's bearing in a *carrousel*—he was then Comte Péguylem—and with his arrogant device : a rocket soaring into the clouds, with this motto in Spanish, ' *I rise as high as man can mount.*' She finds this device ' singular.' ' Singular ' ! There is the word.

Before he became a captain in the Guard Lauzun had been a colonel of dragoons, whose caps, she notes, ' gave this troop an air of gallantry *which one did not find in the others.*' ' Their colonel,' she adds, ' showed a demeanour which distinguished him from the *other officers* all the more because he assumed it in circumstances *in which they could only imitate it with difficulty.* He was *extraordinary* in

every way. I, myself, finding him a man of intellect, should have loved talking to him from that time ; so much am I *affected* by the reputation of a sincere and *singular* personality. He was *different.* He was familiar with very few. I knew this more from others than of myself.' When, on being gazetted captain of the Guard, he received his baton and assumed his duties, she says, ' with an air of distinguished ease, deferent, yet *unconcerned*, I began to look on him as an *extraordinary* man,'—this is always the great impression he makes on her—' of the most agreeable conversation, and I sought opportunities of talking with him. I found in him powers of expression which I found in *no other.*'

This, then, was the initial charm of this charmer. In this great age of Decorum, in this marble, princely heart, one may well gather that there could be nothing of what a succeeding age has called the *coup de foudre.* These people have no nerves, and the magnetism of a look is unknown to them. Lauzun by degrees gains upon the attention of this listless woman, who had doubtless discovered, possibly without conscious realisation, that in that solemn court all things bore a too deadly resemblance. And since however much of a princess one may be one still has feminine vanity, the *woman's man* in Lauzun gave her proud heart a tiny stab. Speaking of Henriette of England, Duchess of Orleans, she says : ' I had no suspicion that he could feel any sentiments of *gallantry* towards her . . . the sentiments he *ordinarily possessed for many ladies.*' From this moment she begins to see into her heart. ' God,' she says with all the gravity of a Bossuet, ' is the Master of our condition. He leaves us in it as far as the vanity of our mind allows. If He had allowed me to regard my own condition as the happiest I could choose in this world, I should

have been satisfied with my birth, my fortune, etc., etc. However, as I have said, I was bored without apparent reason with places I had formerly been pleased in. . . .' That is to say, she begins with ennui :

Mon Dieu, vous m'avez fait puissante et solitaire !

' I began to have an affection for others who had been indifferent to me. . . . I liked the conversation of M. de Lauzun, without his giving me any definite preoccupations.' How slowly everything works in this soul, which finds it so difficult to thaw ! ' After passing a long time amid *these agitations*,' she proceeds, ' I wished to retire into myself and discover what gave me the pleasure, and what gave me pain. I knew that I was wholly preoccupied with another *condition* than that I had previously *experienced* ; that if I married I should be happier ; that if I made the fortune of someone and raised him to high rank he would be grateful and touched, he would feel affection for me and would be anxious to do everything to give me pleasure. . . .' And after this self-examination in the mode of Bossuet she names Lauzun, whom she invariably calls M. de Lauzun. What determines her in this is above all ' the distinction of his conduct compared with *that of others*, the elevation of his mind above *other men's*, the charm of his conversation, and *a million singularities* which I recognised in him.'

Always these singularities, this originality, this quality of the extraordinary and unexpected for her, in her princely and aristocratic routine ! This woman had divined modern Dandyism ; for evidently it is here.

IV

Mathilde de la Môle, in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, does not render count to herself of her sensations more minutely than Mademoiselle ; save that Mathilde is combative, and Mademoiselle too much a princess to combat her feelings. She experiences them, therefore it is well. Ennui seizes her when she does not encounter *him* (Lauzun) in the Queen's chamber. ' I wished to see him with the Queen, or *alone*, in my apartment, or in the courtyard, either by chance, or *otherwise*. I am by nature impatient ; I could not bear anyone. Company drove me to despair. . . .'

From these strong symptoms two sentiments are evolved : the resolution to declare her love to the King, and a disconsolateness because Lauzun, by his respectful and submissive demeanour, did not appear to be aware of ' all that she thought about him.' Always a princess, moreover, even amid these agitations, she is concerned to discover in French History any examples of persons of an inferior rank to Lauzun who had married the daughters, and even the widows, of the sovereign. She remembers the loves of Corneille, and, curiously, sends to Paris for his works, because she has (she says) seen portrayed in one of his comedies a destiny similar to her own. Corneille's works arrive, and she learns by heart certain lines which she had remembered vaguely, contemplating in them solely from a Divine aspect, (she adds) what most persons see with a profane eye. Here are the lines—in any case very worthy of Corneille :

> Quand les ordres du Ciel nous ont faits l'un pour l'autre,
> Lise, c'est un amour bientôt fait que le nôtre.

Sa main entre les cœurs, par un secret pouvoir,
Sème l'intelligence avant que de se voir !
Il prépare si bien l'amant et la maîtresse
Que leur âme au seul nom s'émeut et s'intéresse.
On s'estime, on se cherche, on s'aime en un moment,
Tout ce qu'on s'entredit persuade aisément.
Et sans s'inquiéter de mille peurs frivoles
La voix semble courir au-devant des paroles !
La langue en peu de mots en explique beaucoup ;
Les yeux plus éloquents font tout voir tout d'un coup ;
Et de quoi qu'à l'envi tous les deux nous instruisent,
Le cœur en entend plus que tous les deux n'en disent.

After consulting the oracle of Genius she hesitates no more. She has made up her mind, and submits her marriage-project before the Blessed Sacrament. One day (a 2nd of March) she sees M. de Lauzun attending the Queen. ' He might have been able to divine,' she says, ' when I passed before him, what was in my heart for him, from the gaiety with which I addressed him.' But since Lauzun does not appear at all to comprehend, from beneath the cloak of respect with which he is enveloped, she affects to discuss with him a marriage with the Duc de Lorraine, and to ask his opinion.

It is here that the most delicious comedy, the Love Comedy, begins. She intends to be understood, and he—who understands very well—will not understand. Having cracked the ice, she hands it to him to break it finally. It is nothing more than a thin, transparent film, but he does not break it. He does not even lay on it the finger-tip which could have broken it at a touch. Lauzun becomes

the most graceful, profound, and irritatingly respectful Tartufe who ever existed. The man's conduct is a masterpiece. One can draw from it general maxims and axioms for gaining a princess's love ; but who has any princesses to conquer nowadays ? There are women bearing the title ; but souls of this princely quality are no more.

Here, then, is the first axiom of the exquisite Machiavellianism of Lauzun—for it is exquisitely detailed : The more a proud woman, a princess by nature as by birth, becomes transparent and tender, the more one must consolidate respect and impenetrably envelop oneself in it.

Lauzun never once failed to observe this law, even amid proximities of a kind most intoxicating to a man as vain, as ambitious, and as in love as he (for he may have been. . . . Libertines are capable of anything, even of falling in love with virgins of forty-three). And, in superheated vanity, moreover, there is a flame which devilishly resembles love. ' *Devilishly* ' is the word.

You must read in the *Memoirs* of the Grande Mademoiselle something of the manœuvrings of respect on the one hand and proud and impatient tenderness on the other. This princess, who is well aware of the pen in her hand, writes charming things as only writers of genius have written them ; marvels of veiled grace and passion hypocritically displayed—that passion which longs to be seen but will not betray itself. Piquant situation ! She asks his advice, and he gives it, helps her to think of someone worthy to marry her, does not find anyone, suggests to her the idea of plunging into *la haute dévotion*, the devotion of the period. The man, who sees perfectly well that she adores him, is magnificently serious. ' It is not,' he says to her, ' that I am unable to conceive that there is something

ridiculous in passing a whole lifetime without choosing one's position whatever one's quality. At forty one should not seek pleasures suitable for girls of between fifteen and twenty-four. Therefore I am bound to advise you either to enter religion or to take up a devout life in the world.' He nevertheless approves her plan of raising a man to her level, but affects a profound ignorance of the person on whom the eyes of this woman, who sees no other than him, are fixed.

During the course of Mademoiselle's passion for Lauzun Madame, the Duchess of Orleans, dies : the King talks of making Mademoiselle take her place. But the friend of the Chevalier de Lorraine can have nothing in common with a soul so superbly feminine, and the King, who perceives the root of things, is ashamed of his suggestion, and ends by relinquishing it. But Lauzun himself, with the skill of a devil who understands women, feigns a belief that Mademoiselle wishes this marriage to take place, and advises her to contract it. . . . It is then that Mademoiselle, unable to bear any more, confesses her love to Lauzun himself ; but through what a tangle of embarrassments, what maiden shame ! The child-like awakenings of this haughty woman's heart are divine. Lauzun does not depart a hair-breadth from his method. When he is perfectly sure that she is about to reveal all to him, he will not hear anything, and begs her to keep her confidences.

' He replied,' she says, ' that " *I made him tremble.* . . . If by some chance I do not approve your decision I realise that you, resolute and strong-willed as you are, will not allow yourself to see me again. I am too anxious to keep the honour of your good graces to listen to confidences which might risk my losing them. I will have

nothing to do with this, and I implore you to speak to me no more of it. . . .'

How well this incendiary knew how to inflame desire ! The less he wishes to hear the more she is determined to tell him. One day, referring to the same matter : ' I had a longing to breathe on the mirror,' she relates. ' That will cloud the glass, and I will trace the name in large letters, so that you can read it clearly.' But midnight strikes. It is Friday, an unlucky day. ' Ah ! ' she says. ' Now I will tell you no more.' Some days afterwards she hid in her pocket a paper on which she had written simply ' *It is you.*' But she will not give it him on a Friday. ' Give it me,' says Lauzun. ' I promise you not to open it till after midnight.' But she has tremors, and is still hesitating when next day, after dinner, he attends the Queen :—and then Mademoiselle writes this ravishing page, whose details afford me inexpressible charm :

' After the Queen had entered her alcove [*prie-Dieu*] I placed myself at the chimney corner, being alone with him, and took out my paper. I showed it to him, more than once, and then replaced it in my pocket, at other times in my muff. He pressed me eagerly to give it to him. He declared that his heart was beating strongly, and that he thought it a presentiment that I was about to give him occasion to perform an ill service toward someone if he disapproved my choice and intentions. This kind of conversation lasted quite an hour, till we found ourselves each as embarrassed as the other. I said to him : " Here is the paper. I will give it to you on condition that you write me a reply underneath what I have written. You will find enough space there, for my note is short : you will give it back to me this evening in the Queen's apartments, where we can

talk." I had not finished this speech before the Queen went out to go to the Récollets. I followed her, and prayed God very fervently to grant me the accomplishment of my design. My abstraction was excessive. On leaving Church we went to the apartments of M. le Dauphin. The Queen went across to the fireplace. I saw M. de Lauzun come in ; he came up to me without daring to speak, hardly daring to look at me. His embarrassment increased mine. I threw myself *on my knees to warm myself more.* He stood quite close to me. I said to him, *without looking up*, " I am petrified with cold ! " He answered : " I am still agitated by what I have read ; but I am not foolish enough to fall into your snare. I have realised well enough that you wished to divert yourself, and to safeguard yourself, by an extraordinary trick, against telling me the name of this somebody. I shall never feel the least curiosity while you feel the least repugnance in making me any avowal." I said to him, " Nothing can be truer than the two words I have written you, and nothing more determined in my mind than the execution of this plan." He had no time to reply, or else *he could not summon up fortitude enough to sustain the conversation further.*"

Once more, it is incomparable ; in detail and in accent.

V

And it is now that the profound master of seductions becomes admirable, more and more satanically admirable. The thunderbolt of good fortune which crashes down upon him does not so much as crack the shell of hypocrisy in which he is enclosed, like a tortoise. He is sceptical of what his noble Inamorata says to him ; she who has not recaptured (for she has never possessed them before) but has

discovered, in her sincere passion, the timid graces of a girl of eighteen. The ' *It is you*,' and all she adds to this terrible and delicious ' *It is you*,' do not for one moment dint Lauzun's mask of incredulity. He tells her she is playing with him, and she replies, with more reason, that on the contrary, he is playing with her. The rôles are interchanged. Ordinarily it is the man who persuades and the woman who is to be persuaded. Here the princess is the man, the younger son of family the woman . . . and what a woman ! Célimène and Tartufe combined ! The more she outpours the splendour of her almost royal love the more he assumes humility, shrinks in stature. He seems to say to this woman who is stooping to him, ' Lower ! lower still ! ' Absolutely, the fortunate rascal ! It is the antithesis and the justification of his device : ' *I soar as high as man can mount.*'

The details of this romantic comedy—romance for the one, comedy for the other—are almost as charming as the comedy itself. Everything is in it. In this Court whose etiquette is almost Spanish she ventures to lean on him when she rises. He takes advantage of this to give her back her paper, which she slips, like a little girl, into her muff—she, the heroine of the Faubourg St. Antoine, who had ordered the cannon to be fired against Louis XIV ! He obstinately refuses to believe, but a flash of lightning has pierced the mask, and she knows it. ' He will be,' he says, ' ever obedient to her wishes.' That is not a No ; but having said it—a thing impossible not to say —behold him engulfed once more in respect to a degree sufficient to send her mad with impatience. At last he bursts out with the great word—the word *humiliating*. ' Can it be possible that you could wish to marry a servant of your first-cousin ? ' It is thus that he refers to his captaincy of the Bodyguard.

But as he had calculated, every kind of barrier he erected before Mademoiselle went down before her. She boldly asked the King's permission to marry M. de Lauzun, and—stupefying fact !—the King made no opposition. He advised Mademoiselle to reflect deeply, not to act lightly, etc. Mademoiselle is impatient at the temporising she divines underneath the King's answer, and Lauzun defends the King against her. He thinks the King is right to urge her to devote thought to a matter which is *beneath* her, etc., etc. The King says nothing to Lauzun, but is gracious to him and her alike. This gives Mademoiselle grounds for hope, when one evening in the Queen's apartments Lauzun says to her brusquely : ' There must be no more delay in speaking to the King. You must say to him, believe me, " Sire, the *shortest* follies are the best. I have come to thank Your Majesty for the reflection you have made me exercise. I devote *no more thought* to what I asked of Your Majesty." ' Mademoiselle, exasperated, overstrained, speaks to the King, but in a different manner—and with what tact, what delicacy, what resolution ! (see Volume VI, p. 24). The King says only one thing to her : ' I will oppose neither your will nor the good fortune of M. de Lauzun ; but do nothing without mature reflection.' This amounted to consent. The whole Court learns the staggering news : the marriage of Mademoiselle. Lauzun's bearing is the modest, almost blushing, air of a man captured like a girl. ' I need all my reason,' he says, ' to prevent myself losing my head.' And when the marriage-contract is drawn up and all is ready for the ceremony, Lauzun, always the same Lauzun, with his logical, insupportable humility, says once more to Mademoiselle : ' if you feel *the least shrinking* when you stand *before the priest*, I beg you with all my

heart to break off everything.' And on Mademoiselle's answering, '*You have no love for me!*'—'That,' he says, 'is what I shall say only when I leave the church. I would rather die than let you see before that time what is in my heart for you.' . . . And lo! a sudden enormous unhappiness overclouds the heart, the great heart of this happy woman. She begins to weep, *without knowing why*, she says. Next morning the King stops the preparations.

VI

My only concern here is the superior manner in which Lauzun conducted his conquest of Mademoiselle. He executed the business like the greatest artist in seduction ever known. I have vainly probed his conduct for a fault, a forgetfulness, an inattention. It needed nothing less than the authority of Louis XIV to demolish this masterpiece of Lauzun—Louis XIV, who ceased to be a Louis XIV in this affair; for the King, whose reputation was that of being the most honest man in his kingdom,* here behaved either with the greatest weakness or with the greatest duplicity. Surrounded, worked upon, importuned by the coterie of Monsieur, by Mademoiselle's stepmother, by her sister, who had married a Guise—did he yield miserably after giving Mademoiselle his consent, did he break his word? Or did he deceive her, which would be at the same time a lie and a cruelty? In either case Louis XIV appears small, almost shabby. The sole reason he gave Mademoiselle, despairing, eloquent and most pathetic at his feet, was the *soi-disant* opinion of the Courts of Europe: a cowardly reason, which Mademoiselle

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* '*Reputations! one does not know why.*' (*Gresset*, Le Méchant.)

valiantly dismissed as *shameful*. The King was inflexible before her tears, but as he refused her he shed some himself. When tigers devour us they do not weep ; when crocodiles weep, it is to ensnare. These tears of Louis XIV tarnish the recognised greatness of his aspect, and remain incomprehensible to us, if they are not actually a dishonour.

Mademoiselle's despair was tragical. Lauzun shed tears to increase it. Without doubt there was sincerity in his tears as well. How could he not have shed them ? Boabdil wept over his city. The King, for ever odious, came to her and tried to offer consolation, embraced her, held his cheek against hers a long time ; and Mademoiselle found the hardihood to say to him, ' You behave like those monkeys who stifle their young with caresses.' A speech certainly equal in audacity to her famous volley of cannon !

In her unhappiness Mademoiselle chose to appear no more at Court. And—yes, it was Lauzun who urged her back, saying that it was wrong to keep aloof so long from the King. When she met Lauzun she wept and cried aloud, no matter where she was. The man of steel, making use of his steel further to lacerate this princely heart to the advantage of the passion with which he inspired her, went as far as to say to her, ' If you continue thus, *I will never be found in the same place with you.* I shall stay in my apartment.' And she dared no more (she says) give way to tears in front of him !

After the rupture of the marriage project the King gave Lauzun a governorship ; on which, ' I shall never,' said Mademoiselle, ' be content with what the King does till he gives me to you. Till then, *all your preferments* leave me unmoved.' Lauzun, his marriage

having been broken off, affected a negligence in his dress ; * this added to the unhappiness of Mademoiselle, but he demanded that she should look with care to her own, in spite of the affliction under which she was growing thin. She loved him with that physical idolatry without which there is no love. (See the charming story of the rose-red ribbon of Lauzun's cravat at the Flanders review, Volume VI of the *Memoirs*.) Even after the disaster the unhappy woman never reached the end of the strange cruelties by means of which Lauzun attached to himself, as with nails, the heart on which he had cast his spell. One day there was a rumour current that she was about to marry the Duke of York. Lauzun went to her and said, ' If you wish to marry the Duke, I will ask the King to send me to England to negotiate the marriage.' She answered him sublimely, ' Nothing but yours ! ' He threw himself at her feet at these words and stayed there without speaking. ' I was tempted to raise him,' she says, ' but I overcame the temptation, and he rose and went out.' He set out for Flanders, affecting to forget to say good-

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* *Rather, I think, he arranged it so ; a piece of hypocrisy, like all his other conduct. He was not the man to heap ashes on his head like a mourning Jew. If he heaped any, it was very lightly. But Lauzun was too much a Dandy in grain to forget the exterior effect of the* œil de poudre *of a chagrin, which is interesting and does not disfigure. The Dandies are always preoccupied with this. Remember in Stendhal* (Le Rouge et le Noir) *the Russian Dandy who prescibes to Julien Sorel the black cravat of melancholy for each occasion on which he delivers to the parlourmaid of the woman he loves the famous letters to which she does not reply.*

bye to the woman whose life he carried with him. She chid him for it, ' but,' she says, ' I wished to be angry with him, I saw him, I had not the strength.' She was actually bewitched. ' I sometimes,' she proceeds, ' felt a disposition to upbraid him and pity myself, but he banished my desire to do so *by his manner, which I cannot describe, so singular it is.*' Always this singularity ! Always the Dandy !

VII

I repeat, I am concerned here to-day only with this conquest by Lauzun, a thing apart in the history of human seductions. Hence there is no need for me to speak of his arrest and imprisonment at Pignerol. Mademoiselle remained his slave to the end of her days. Even the scorn she felt for him later could not prevail against his ascendancy. He issued from Pignerol. He went to Bourbon, to Amboise, and finally came back to Court. And he returned with the mask off. He could no more hope for marriage, and the conquest was accomplished. He showed himself for what he was, a gambler and libertine, a hypocrite in devotion, compact of cupidity, lacking pride and lacking gratitude for Mademoiselle at the very moment he deceived her and became incensed with her. All this is hideous. But what a power ! Mademoiselle sees everything, knows everything ; ' but I had gone too far,' she says, ' not to be compelled to complete what I had begun.'

Such is the fatal destiny of pride in love.

And she completed it. Louis XIV finally permitted a *secret* marriage ; but at what a price ! At the price of half Mademoiselle's fortune, ceded to one of his bastards. He continued, alas ! in this

affair of Mademoiselle and Lauzun to be no more than the Louis XIV of received opinion. The *Memoirs* do not go thus far. They break off brusquely, as if for shame. But the reader already hears in the distance the phrase which will echo down the centuries : ' Henriette de Bourbon, take off my boots ! '—an order issued to the first cousin of the proudest monarch who has ever lived.

Admit that this story, which is but one episode in the history of a pre-Dandy, is as impassioned as the most skilfully invented romance of to-day, and that it has more interest than an analysis of any one of them.

THE END